
**Mid-term Review of the UNEP/GEF Project
Implementation of the National Biosafety Framework in
Venezuela in Accordance to the Cartagena Protocol on
Biosafety (GEF Project ID: 5290, 2017-2021)**



Final Report



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Framework in Venezuela in Accordance to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety"
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ABOUT THE REVIEW

Report Language(s): English.

Review Type: Mid-term Review

Brief Description: This report is a Mid-term Review of a UNEP - GEF Project implemented between 2017 and 2021. The Project's overall development goal is to *establish a platform of legislative, regulatory, social and infrastructure to implement the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in order to contribute to the global conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity*. The review sought to assess Project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine outcomes and impacts (actual and potential) stemming from the Project, including their sustainability. The review has two primary purposes: a) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and b) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UNEP, the GEF and the relevant national agencies participating to the Project.

Key words: Biodiversity, Biosafety, Cartagena Protocol, Biotechnology, Latin America and Caribbean, Venezuela, Environmental Governance, Public Participation.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BCH	Biosafety Clearing-House
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CNB	Comisión Nacional de Bioseguridad (National Biosafety Commission)
COP-MOP	The Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety
CPB	Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety
FA	Funding Agency
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GMOs	Genetically Modified Organisms
GRULAC	United Nations Regional Group Latin America and Caribbean Countries
IA	Implementing Agency
LMOs	Living Modified Organisms
MINEC	Ministerio Del Poder Popular Para El Ecosocialismo (Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism)
MSP	Medium-Sized Project
MTR	Mid-Term Review
MTS	UN Environment Programme Medium Term Strategy
NBF	National Biosafety Framework
NCA	National Competent Authority
NEA	National Executing Agency
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NPC	National Project Coordinator
PIR	Programme Implementation Review
POW	Programme of Work
SD	Sustainable Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TE	Terminal Evaluation
ToRs	Terms of References
UCV	Universidad Central de Venezuela (Central University of Venezuela)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION TABLE

Table 1. Project Identification

GEF Project ID:	5290
Implementing Agency:	UN Environment Programme
Executing Agency	<i>Oficina de Integración y Asuntos Internacionales del Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ecosocialismo - MINEC (Office of Integration and International Affairs of the Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism)</i>
Relevant SDG(s) and indicator(s):	<p><i>SDG 2 – Zero Hunger</i></p> <p><i>Target 2.5 - By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising.</i></p> <p><i>Indicator 2.5.1 - Number of plant and animal genetic resources for food and agriculture secured in either medium- or long-term conservation facilities.</i></p> <p><i>Indicator 2.5.2 - Proportion of local breeds classified as being at risk, not at risk or at unknown level of risk of extinction.</i></p>
Sub-programme:	<p><i>Programme of Work for the Biennium 2018–2019</i></p> <p><i>Sub-programme 3 – Healthy and productive ecosystems</i></p> <p><i>Sub-programme 4 – Environmental governance</i></p>
Expected Accomplishment(s):	<p><u><i>Subprogramme 3</i></u></p> <p><i>(a) The health and productivity of marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems are institutionalized in education, monitoring and cross-sector and transboundary collaboration frameworks at the national and international levels</i></p> <p><i>Indicator (i) Increase in the number of countries and transboundary collaboration frameworks that have made progress to monitor and maintain the health and productivity of marine and terrestrial ecosystems</i></p> <p><u><i>Subprogramme 4</i></u></p> <p><i>(a) The international community increasingly converges on common and integrated approaches to achieve environmental objectives and implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</i></p> <p><i>Indicator (ii) Increase in the uptake of approaches for the coherent implementation of multiple multilateral environmental agreements or other multilateral institutional mechanisms as a result of UNEP support</i></p> <p><i>(b) Institutional capacities and policy and/or legal frameworks enhanced to achieve internationally agreed environmental goals, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals</i></p> <p><i>Indicator (i) Increase in the number of countries that have enhanced institutional capacity and legal frameworks to fully implement the multilateral environmental agreements and for the achievement of internationally agreed environmental goals including the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals</i></p>

Programme of Work Output(s):	<i>Programme of Work for the Biennium 2018-2019 / Subprogramme 3 – Healthy and productive ecosystems / Subprogramme 4 – Environmental governance</i>		
UNEP approval date:	<i>1 August 2013</i>	GEF approval date:	<i>24 February 2017</i>
Project type:	<i>Medium-sized Project</i>	GEF Operational Programme #:	<i>GFL-11207-14AC0003-SB-008055</i>
Focal Area(s):	<i>Biodiversity</i>	GEF Strategic Priority:	<i>BD-3</i>
Expected start date:	<i>2017</i>	Actual start date:	<i>9 August 2017</i>
Planned completion date:	<i>8 August 2021</i>	Actual operational completion date:	<i>Not applicable</i>
Planned Project budget at approval:	<i>USD 3,932,000</i>	Actual total expenditures reported as of 31/12/2020:	<i>USD 2,245,258</i>
GEF grant allocation:	<i>USD 1,860,000</i>	GEF grant expenditures reported as of 31/12/2020:	<i>USD 637,070</i>
Project Preparation Grant - GEF financing:	<i>USD 54,714</i>	Project Preparation Grant - cofinancing:	<i>USD 25,000</i>
Expected Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project cofinancing:	<i>USD 2,072,000</i>	Secured Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project cofinancing:	<i>USD 1,564,938</i>
First disbursement:	<i>13 September 2017</i>	Planned date of financial closure:	<i>30 April 2022</i>
No. of formal Project revisions:	<i>04</i>	Date of last approved Project revision:	<i>June-2020</i>
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	<i>None</i>	Date of last/next Steering Committee meeting:	<i>Not applicable</i>
Mid-term Review/ (planned date):	<i>Second half of 2019</i>	Mid-term Review/ (actual date):	<i>Jan -May 2021</i>
Terminal Review (planned date):	<i>Not applicable</i>	Terminal Review (actual date):	<i>Not applicable</i>
Coverage - Country(ies):	<i>Venezuela</i>	Coverage - Region(s):	<i>Latin America and Caribbean</i>
Dates of previous Project phases:	<i>Not applicable</i>	Status of future Project phases:	<i>Not applicable</i>

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project background

1. Venezuela is one of the biodiversity-richest countries of the world, with a particular focus on endemic biodiversity, and since its ratification of the *Convention on Biological Diversity* in 1992, the Government of the *República Bolivariana de Venezuela* has implemented an extensive range of laws and decrees to protect its national biodiversity.
2. In the past decades, the Venezuela Government repeatedly expressed concerns about the potential negative impact of biotechnology on its native species. These concerns are clearly reflected in the Government's *National Strategy 2010-2020 for the Conservation of Biological Diversity* and backed up by many past Government's activities aimed at developing a *National Biosafety Framework* that is consistent with the *Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety* (ratified by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in 2002) and its *Strategic Plan 2010-2020*.
3. The Government's request for a Medium-Sized Project for the *Implementation of the National Biosafety Framework in Venezuela in Accordance to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety*, in line with the Government's national priorities, the objectives of the CBD and those of the GEF Biodiversity Focal Area, was approved by GEF in 2017. The overall objective of the Project is to *establish a platform of legislative, regulatory, social and infrastructure to implement the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in order to contribute to the global conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity*.
4. The Project workplan foresees four substantive components: 1) Completion and operation of biosafety legal framework; 2) Development of appropriate institutional and human capacity for decision-making and regulatory compliance in biosafety; 3) Development of appropriate capacities for public participation in decision-making; and 4) Strengthening of infrastructure for the detection and management of LMOs.
5. According to the Project definition: UN Environment Programme is the *Implementing Agency*, UNDP is the *Fund Management Agency*, and the Office of Integration and International Affairs of the Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism (MINEC) is identified as the *National Executing Agency* in charge of the Project. An external *Steering Committee*, chaired by MINEC and composed by representatives of relevant government agencies, academic institutions and other stakeholder representatives, is also established, in the Project document, in order to *provide strategic direction and oversight to Project management* and it was supposed to *meet at least annually or according to the needs of the Project*.
6. The Project officially started in August 2017 with an expected duration of 48 months. Since its inception, however, it experienced significant delays in terms of execution of many project activities, mostly due to the unfavourable nature of external context (see below).

This Review

7. A *Mid-Term Review* of the Project was announced by UNDP in September 2020, assigned in December 2020, and started on January 11, 2021. As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the review was designed as a desk review, not including travels and field visits, and committed to a single consultant, for two months spread over the period of four months. According to its *Terms of References*, the primary purposes of the review are: a) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and b) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UN Environment Programme, UNDP and MINEC.
8. The Project Team, with whom this review has been conducted in close contact via internet, is composed by the Head of the Project National Executing Agency, his Deputy, the

National Project Coordinator, the Implementing Agency Project Task Manager, and the Funding Agency Project Manager.

9. This review started at more than 80% of the Project allocated time and approximately at 60% of the GEF grant allocation authorized as cash advances by the Implementing Agency and 43% of the same GEF grant allocation effectively disbursed through the Fund Management Agency.

10. The information sources, on which the review is based, are a desk review of project-related documents, audio/video interviews with all major Project actors, and the results of an online survey targeting the largest possible number of persons who have been in touch with the Project so far.

Key findings

11. As indicated in the Terms of References, the key findings of this review are organized according to six evaluation criteria: a) Strategic Relevance; b) Effectiveness; c) Financial Management; d) Efficiency; e) Monitoring and Reporting; and f) Sustainability.

12. Strategic Relevance. The whole Project appears well aligned to the UN Environment Programme *Medium Term Strategy* and *Programme of Work* as well as to the *Strategic Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety 2010-2020*, the Sub-programmes 3 (*Healthy and productive ecosystems*) and 4 (*Environmental governance*) of the UN Environment Programme of Work for the Biennium 2018-2019; and with *GEF 7 Biodiversity Strategy*. At national level, the Project is consistent with the *Draft National Biosafety Framework* (developed under the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Project in 2005), the *National Legal Framework on Biological Diversity* (2008), the *Law for the Simplification of Administrative Procedures* (2008), and the *National Strategy 2010-2020 for the Conservation of Biological Diversity* (2010).

13. Quality of Project Design. All Project Expected Outcomes and Outputs, contained in the workplan, are fully in line with the Project objective. However, some of the identified Outputs foresee no conclusive actions in the list of related activities. It is also observed that, under the whole Component 3, the accomplishment of all related Expected Outputs and foreseen activities would not necessarily lead to the accomplishment of the Expected Outcomes or to the implementation of a *National Biosafety Framework* in compliance with Art. 23 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

14. Nature of External Context. The interval in which this Project is being implemented coincides with a period of extreme difficulties for the population of Venezuela and the nature of external context has been rated as *Unfavourable* due to the heavy impact of hyper-inflation, increasing currency substitution, international economic sanctions, socio-political unrest and the COVID-19 on-going pandemic.

15. Effectiveness. Mostly due to the unfavourable nature of external context, the Project accumulated an extreme delay vs. its original workplan. As direct consequence, *none* of the 8 Outcomes and 16 Outputs, defined under the four substantive components of the Project workplan, has been fully achieved to date.

16. Most of the activities listed in the workplan refer either to consultancies or meetings; generally speaking, most of the consultancies planned have been concluded, while very few consultative meetings have been hold and no institutional agreement has been reached so far. The quality of most of the documents produced through consultancies is generally good/high and mostly in line with the demanded outputs (with only one exception, highlighted under Output 1.1.3).

17. Good progresses have been made under Component 4 (Strengthening of infrastructure for the detection and management of LMOs), notwithstanding the huge delay in its implementation. More than 40% of the whole GEF contribution to the Project budget is allocated under this component and much effort has been dedicated by the National

Executing Agency in the realization of a Reference Laboratory for LMOs detection. The infrastructure of the lab has been totally renovated, the equipment is finally reaching the laboratory in these months and laboratory supply has been finally ordered. According to all interviewees, the lab has great potentialities to place itself strategically in the field of LMOs detection at national level and the planned Project activities seems to go in this direction. Considerations on the *Sustainability* of this specific outcome are presented in the main review text and in the final recommendations.

18. The most significant problem currently faced by the Project is the lack of inter-institutional engagement. In fact, though fully recognizing the National Executing Agency's efforts in the attempt of involving the other National Competent Authorities in the Project *Steering Committee*, the results obtained in this direction are non-existent: members of the Committee have not been appointed and no meeting has been hold since the Project inception. The same political absence of nation-wide ownership and driven-ness on this topic has been made evident, on a wider scale, by the *non-existence* of the *National Biosafety Commission*, re-established in 2006 by an executive decree, and listing as its members four other Ministries, together with MINEC, as the Competent National Authorities in all matters concerning LMOs and biosafety, as well as other designated institutions. As of today, and as far this review could ascertain, no activity of the Commission has taken place since its re-establishment in 2006

19. In considering the four Project substantial components, at least the first two and a significant part of the third will require wide political agreement for the achievement of their objectives. It is observed that the absence of both the *Steering Committee* at the Project level, and of the *National Biosafety Commission* at the institutional level, though most probably a direct consequence of the unfavourable nature of external context, have *de facto* reduced the whole Project to a single-ministry initiative and deprived it, so far, of the wider political support that is deemed necessary, in most countries, to transform a draft legal and administrative outline into an approved and functional national framework.

20. In addition to the lack of inter-institutional support, the Project implementation is also currently affected by a lack of effectiveness, in terms of communication and consultation with private and public stakeholders. Limited activities have been, in fact, executed and aimed at sharing Project achievements and progresses with relevant stakeholder groups; however, there is no provision, or planned activity, in the Project so far, aimed at empowering the public to take part *in decision-making processes on LMOs or to promote and systematize* this participation, as foreseen by the Project Expected Outcome 3.2 and requested by Art. 23 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

21. *Financial Management.* All financial reports appear complete and coherent with the approved workplan till mid-2020 (the last approved financial quarterly report was in June 2020). The Project finance experienced serious problems in its first two years due to hyper-inflation and increasing currency substitution causing, after a long time interval, the cancellation of all consultants' contracts which were, later, partially reissued with a change in the currency of payment from Bolivars to US dollars. The acquisition process of the laboratory equipment also took a very long time, mostly due to the difficulty of UNDP procurement in coping with the international economic sanctions vs. Venezuela. With the exception of some initial delays in receiving the financial report from the National Executing Agency, both the Financing and the Implementing Agency have confirmed a good level of compliance with relevant UN financial management standards and procedures.

22. *Efficiency.* In considering the unfavourable nature of the external context, the National Executing Agency managed to keep a very dedicated team in charge of the Project and has eventually coped well in obtaining the products of the consultancies and the equipment of the reference laboratory. However, the *National Biosafety Commission* will necessarily have to

take a substantial role in the final decisions about the effective implementation of the *National Biosafety Framework* and most of the products of the consultancies may possibly be challenged by the other National Competent Authorities, members of the Commission, once this discussion will eventually take place.

23. Monitoring and Reporting. Both the *Logical Framework* and *The Monitoring and Evaluation Budget and Workplan*, enclosed in the Project document, are well designed and provide useful tools for keeping track of Project accomplishment. The *Anubis* centralized *Project Management System* of the UN Environment Programme also provides easy access to all project-related documents and all Project reports are present and consistent with Project activities.

24. Sustainability. Two important threats to Project sustainability are highlighted in the review: a) the current inter-institutional isolation of the National Executing Agency in managing a *governance* activity; and b) the potential lack of adequate financial resources after Project conclusion (specifically for the maintenance of the Reference Laboratory and the continuous training of specialized personnel), due to the weakness of the local currency, and the concurrent dollarization of the national labor market.

Conclusions

25. The *Project for the Implementation of the National Biosafety Framework in Venezuela* has been carried out, since its inception, and for the past four years, in an unfavourable external context causing extreme delays and, consequently, *none* of the Expected Outputs and Outcomes been fully accomplished so far.

26. The National Executing Agency has been gathering a very dedicated and experienced team for the Project implementation and the activities carried out so far, within the limits imposed by the unfavourable nature of the external context, have been executed with high level of professionalism and good quality of the obtained results. Also in terms of administrative performance, the whole Project has been carried out in a satisfactory manner.

27. Potential sustainability risks, after the conclusion of the Project GEF-funded activities, are indicated as *significant* for some of the expected Outcomes.

28. Generally speaking, this Project could be regarded as a well managed chain of actions, regrettably executed in total isolation from the relevant institutional and non-institutional stakeholder groups. The current result is an obvious *impasse* and, so far, no strategy to overcome the isolation of the National Executing Agency in the implementation of the Project has been effectively devised and/or executed.

29. The successful involvement of both institutional and non-institutional stakeholders, in all relevant Project activities, is indicated as a necessary requisite for the Project to accomplish its overall objective. As long as the current isolation remains, the likelihood of the intended positive impacts foreseen by the Project is estimated as extremely low.

30. Based on the findings from this review, the Overall Rating of the Project is *Moderately Unsatisfactory* (a table of ratings against all evaluation criteria is found in the *Conclusions* section of this review).

Lessons Learned

31. *Lesson 1:* A dedicated and expert team is the best asset to cope with an unfavourable external context.

32. *Lesson 2:* Workplan foreseen activities should be clearly leading to the effective achievement of the expected outputs and outcomes.

33. *Lesson 3:* Projects dealing with *Governance* must rely on an effective and dedicated *Steering Committee* as well as on a wide and solid inter-institutional support.

34. *Lesson 4: Monitoring Plans, to be efficient, should be able to effectively trigger alarms and eventually to question the IA about the opportunity of temporarily suspending Project implementation*

Recommendations

35. *Recommendation 1: Project implementation should be placed on hold (i.e. suspension of any further cash advance and/or disbursements), pending: a) an effective meeting of the Steering Committee, and b) explicit commitments, by all designated National Competent Authorities of the National Biosafety Commission, to appoint their members and enable the activities of the Commission.*

36. *Recommendation 2: A new Project workplan and time extension should be discussed within the Steering Committee, taking into consideration: the Project unfavourable operating context, the remaining available resources, and the specific needs of the Steering Committee's partner institutions in the implementation of the NBF.*

37. *Recommendation 3: Measures to mitigate the financial sustainability risk of Project outcomes (specifically for the support of both laboratory activities and personnel training, after the Project conclusion) should be discussed within the Steering Committee and possibly implemented within the new workplan.*

38. *Recommendation 4: Alignment with the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety should be verified in: a) the Expected Outputs and related activities of Component 3 (with reference to Art. 23 of the CPB); and b) in considering the Guide for the evaluation and risk analysis of LMOs, produced under Output 1.1.3 (with reference to Art. 15 of the CPB).*

II. PROJECT OVERVIEW

39. Since its ratification of the *Convention on Biological Diversity* (CBD) in 1992, the Government of the *República Bolivariana de Venezuela* (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) approved an extensive range of laws and decrees to protect national biodiversity. The framework law that today regulates the management of biodiversity in the country is the *Ley de Gestión la Diversidad Biológica* (Biological Diversity Management Law), enacted in 2008.

40. In 2003, the *Comisión Nacional de Bioseguridad* (CNB, National Biosafety Commission) was established, by executive decree, to advise the National Executive in activities related to genetically modified organisms, biotechnology and biosafety. In 2006 another decree re-defined rules and composition of the Commission. As of today, and as far this review could ascertain, no activity of the CNB has taken place since its re-establishment in 2006.

41. In 2003 the Government of Venezuela ratified the *Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety* (CPB). From 2001 to 2005 the country took part to the UNEP-GEF Global Project for the *Development of Draft National Biosafety Frameworks*; in 2008 and 2010, the country participated to the UNEP-GEF Global Projects for *Building Capacity for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House of the Cartagena Protocol* (UNEP-GEF BCH-I) and *Continued Enhancement of Building Capacity for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House* (UNEP-GEF BCH-II).

42. The execution of a Medium-Sized Project (MSP) for the *Implementation of the National Biosafety Framework (NBF) in Venezuela in Accordance to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety* was agreed in 2017, among the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UN Environment Programme and the Government of Venezuela, in accordance with the Government's national priorities, the objectives of the CBD and those of the GEF Biodiversity Focal Area, with special focus on the GEF strategic objective BS-3 on supporting the complete and effective implementation of the *Cartagena* and *Nagoya Protocols*.

43. The overall objective of the MSP was set to *establish a platform of legislative, regulatory, social and infrastructure to implement the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in order to contribute to the global conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity*. The Project workplan (available in details in Annex IV) foresees four substantive components, plus an operational one related to monitoring and evaluation and Project operations; Project components and expected outcomes of the workplan are summarized in *Table 2*.

Table 2. Project Components and Expected Outcomes as for the Project workplan

Project Components	Expected Outcomes
1. Completion and operation of biosafety legal framework.	1.1. Regulatory biosafety framework is completed, adopted and integrated within the National Strategy for the Conservation of Biodiversity 2010-2020 and its National Action Plan.
2. Development of appropriate institutional and human capacity for decision-making and regulatory compliance in biosafety.	2.1. The institutional and administrative framework is reinforced to provide effective responses to LMO applications and communicate decisions in line with the CPB; 2.2. There is greater human capacity, clarity, scientific and technological bases to make decisions regarding LMOs; 2.3. There is greater human capacity, clarity, scientific and technology to control / monitor activities with LMOs in the country.
3. Development of appropriate capacities for public participation in decision-making.	3.1. Increase the level of public understanding of biosafety through operations based on participatory diagnosis; 3.2. Public participation in decision-making processes on LMOs is promoted and systematized; 3.3. A coordinated governmental system for public access to information on biosafety is supported in accordance with Article 20 of the CPB.
4. Strengthening of infrastructure for the detection and management of LMOs.	4.1. Equip and operate the Reference Laboratory for Detection of LMOs of the Ministry of Popular Power for the Environment, the lead agency for Biosafety in Venezuela, responsible for supervision and control of LMOs in the country.
5. M&E and Project operations.	5.1. Project executed in a timely manner, achieving outcomes and producing high quality outputs.

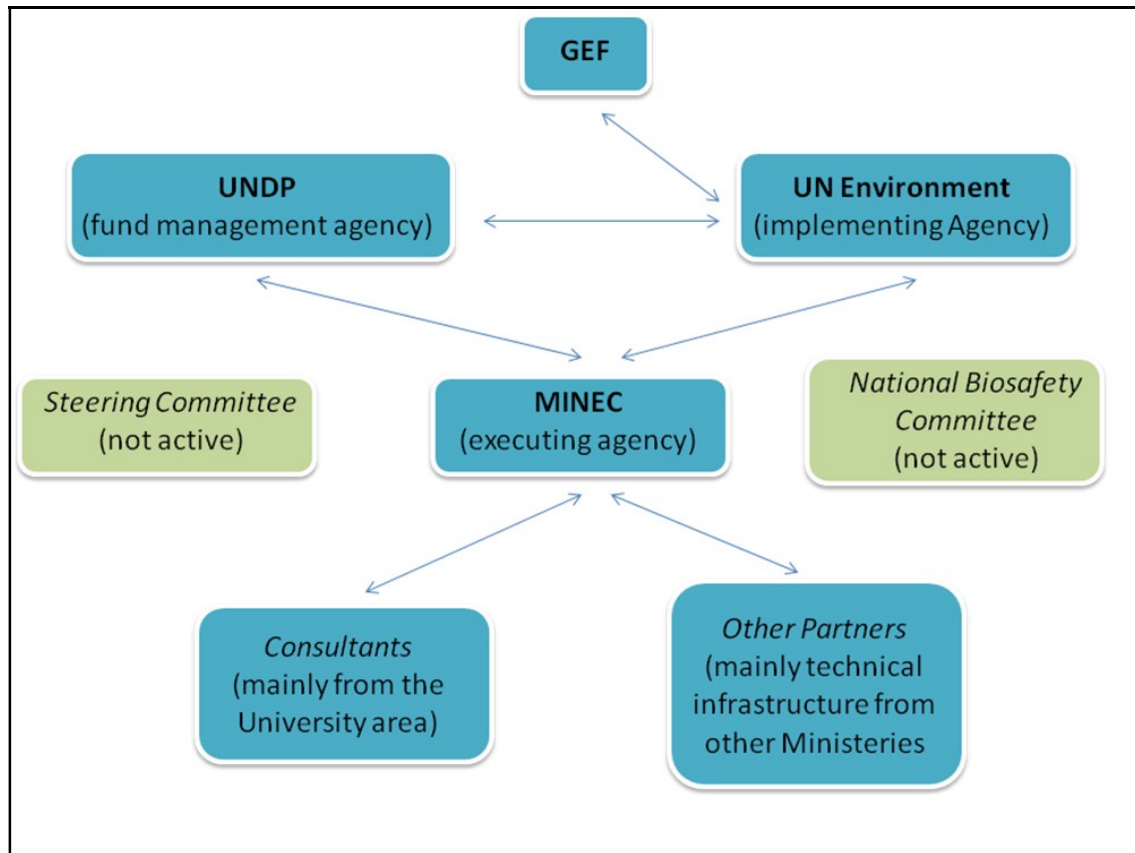
44. According to the Project definition: UN Environment Programme is the *Implementing Agency* (IA) of the Project, UNDP is the *Fund Management Agency* (FA) in charge of Project funding administration, and the *Oficina de Integración y Asuntos Internacionales del Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ecosocialismo* (Office of Integration and International Affairs of the Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism, MINEC), which is also the office of the GEF Operational focal point and the CBD/CPB/Nagoya/BCH focal points, is identified as the *National Executing Agency* (NEA) in charge of the Project.

45. The *National Project Coordinator* (NPC) was identified by MINEC within the personnel of its *Dirección General de Diversidad Biológica* (General Directorate of Biological Diversity), and is responsible for the daily coordination of the Project activities and liaise with all Project's stakeholders. As of today, the NPC is also the CPB and BCH National Focal point.

46. An external *Steering Committee*, chaired by the MINEC and composed by representatives of relevant government agencies, academic institutions and other stakeholder representatives, was foreseen, in the Project document, in order to *provide strategic direction and oversight to Project management* and it was supposed to *meet at last annually or according to the needs of the Project*. As of today, no member of the *Steering Committee* has been appointed and no meeting has been hold since the Project inception.

47. The detail of the Project structure is shown in *Table 3*.

Table 3. Project implementation structure



48. With reference to stakeholder engagement and responsiveness, it is noted that the Project document repeatedly mentions the inclusion, in the list of stakeholders, of Governmental entities, non-governmental entities, academic sectors, private sector, and civil society. Unfortunately, the whole Project design lacks of a more in-depth stakeholder analysis and the Project document, to this purpose, only mention a list of Governmental entities (the General Direction of Biological Diversity, the Ministries of Agricultural Production and Lands, Health, Industry and Trade, Food, Education, Science and Technology, Fisheries and Aquaculture, and the National Biosafety Commission); plus the *public/private universities and research Institutions* (targeted for providing support in the execution of certain training and sensitizing activities in universities and public institutions, and be a source of experts for capacity building activities); and *social groups* (targeted for providing technical input to the Project and aiding in undertaking of awareness activities). No further reference to, or description of, the stakeholder groups to be involved in the Project appears in the Project document.

49. The Project officially started in August 2017, with an expected duration of 48 months. Since its inception, however, it experienced significant delays in terms of execution of some

Project activities, due to factors external to the Project associated with hyper-inflation, increasing currency substitution (dollarization), international economic sanctions, socio-political unrest and the COVID-19 on-going pandemic.

50. In following the development of appropriate ToRs, a dozen contracts for consultancies were requested to, and signed by, UNDP in the period March-April 2018. By that time, Venezuela was already experiencing a severe hyper-inflation and the amount in local currency indicated in these contracts was soon considered incongruous by the consultants. Taking into account the macro-economic situation, and after a long negotiation process with UNDP headquarters, the consultants' contracts were cancelled and, in the period July-August 2019, nine of them were reissued with a change in the currency of payment from Bolivars to US dollars.

51. A second cause of delay in the Project implementation has been the procurement process to acquire part of the laboratory equipment which, according to PIR documents, took approximately 60 weeks, and has been reaching the country only in these past months.

52. In March 2020, the worldwide pandemic of COVID-19 hit Venezuela and, since then, all face-to-face meetings have been suspended (and only partially resumed through online consultations). All Project activities were slowed down, also due to the limitation of movements between the MINEC and other Government headquarters, located in Caracas, and Maracay (approx. 120 Km by car), seat of the Reference Laboratory being equipped under Component 4 as well as of the Agriculture and Biology faculties of the Universidad Central de Venezuela (UCV, Central University of Venezuela), heavily involved in the laboratory implementation.

53. In the attempt to cope with all these delays the IA and the NEA have updated and modified yearly the Project workplan; the last signed version is dated June 2020 and foresees, as for the initial plan, the finalization of all Project activities by August 2021. The IA reports having identified, together with the NEA, the need of a time extension of the project deadline, but not having reached yet an agreement, mainly due to the the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the NEA capacity to complete the 2020 reporting.

54. The overall Project budget is of USD 3,932,000, made up of a GEF allocation of USD 1,860,000 and cofinancing support of USD 2,072,000 from various partners and agencies of the Government, both in cash and in-kind. The total estimated Project cost at its inception, broken down per component and per funding source is shown in *Table 4*.

Table 4. Total estimated Project cost

Project Component	GEF Trust Fund (USD)	Cofinancing (USD)
1. Completion and operation of biosafety legal framework	234,000	500,000
2. Development of appropriate institutional and human capacity for decision-making and regulatory compliance in biosafety	369,500	400,000
3. Development of appropriate capacities for public participation in decision-making.	153,686	400,000
4. Strengthening of infrastructure for the detection and management of LMOs	849,814	700,000
5. Monitoring and Evaluation and Project operations	98,000	
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>1,705,000</i>	<i>2,000,000</i>
<i>Project management Cost</i>	<i>155,000</i>	<i>72,000</i>
Total Project costs	1,860,000	2,072,000

III. MID-TERM REVIEW OUTLINE

55. The vacancy for this *Mid-Term Review of the UN Environment Programme / Global Environment Facility Project* was posted on the UNDP Procurement Notice Website in September 2020 and the consultancy was assigned in December 2020, hiring a single consultant for 2 months spread over the period of four months, starting from January 11, 2021. As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mid-Term Review (MTR) was designed as a desk review, not including travels and field visits.

56. As for its Terms of References (ToRs), the primary purposes of the MTR are defined as: *a) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and b) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UN Environment Programme, UNDP and MINEC.* The ToRs also specify that the scope of the MTR is to *analyze whether the Project is on-track; what problems or challenges it is encountering; and what corrective actions are required.* The MTR is also required to *assess Project performance; determine the likelihood of the Project achieving its intended outcomes and impacts, including their sustainability, and identify lessons of operational relevance for future Project formulation and implementation and, specifically, for the remainder of the Project.*

57. In accordance with the UN Environment Programme Evaluation Policy, MTRs are usually undertaken approximately half way through project implementation. However, as mentioned above and as clearly described in both ToRs and previous PIR documents, the Project has experienced significant delays in terms of execution of Project activities. The MTR, therefore, started at more than 80% of the Project allocated time (the 40th of the 48 expected months of Project duration), and approximately at 60% of the GEF grant allocation authorized as cash advances (according to UN Environment Programme financial summary in the Anubis project page), and 43% of the same GEF grant allocation effectively disbursed (according to UNDP Combined Delivery Reports for the period 2017-2020). *Table 5* provides a summary of the authorizations and disbursements of the GEF grant allocation, broken down per year, as of December 2020.

Table 5. GEF grant allocation as of January 2021

Year	Cash Advances Authorized by UN Environment Programme	Disbursements made by UNDP
2017	287.207 USD	67.367 USD
2018	0 USD	187.262 USD
2019	391.472 USD	172.272 USD
2020	446.615 USD	372.831 USD
Total	1.125.294 USD	799.732 USD
Percentage of the Total GEF grant allocation (1.860.000 USD)	60%	43%

58. The MTR started in January 2021 with individual one-to-one video-conferences between the consultant and the Project team members and continued with the *kick-off* meeting, during which the MTR strategy and calendar were illustrated by the consultant and discussed with all members of the *Project Team*. Further interactions with the Project team went along, uninterrupted till March, when the impact of COVID-19 pandemic made communications scarce and hindered the possibility of presenting the preliminary findings notes in a proper video-conference till the end of April.

59. A draft report of this Mid-Term Review was circulated among the Project Team, on April 27th (the day after the plenary video-conference hold on the first possible date due to COVID-19 impact), for their comments and suggestions to be integrated in the final report. Unfortunately, since then and till the ending date of the MTR consultancy on May 12th, no further contribution reached the reviewer and this final version of the report reflects almost integrally the draft report presented at the video-conference and circulated thereafter.

60. The composition of the Project Team is listed in *Table 6* and a summary of the MTR main activities is reported in *Table 7*.

Table 6. Project Team Composition

Name	Institutional Role	Project Role
Miguel Serrano	Director of the <i>Oficina de Integración y Asuntos Internacionales</i> (Office of Integration and International Affairs) at the <i>Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ecosocialismo</i> (Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism, MINEC) and GEF Operational Focal Point	Head of the Project National Executing Agency (NEA)
Yorlandis Chiquito	Director of <i>Oficina de Integración</i> (Office of Integration, MINEC)	Deputy of the Project National Executing Agency (NEA)
Carliz Diaz	<i>Dirección General de Diversidad Biológica</i> (General Directorate of Biological Diversity, MINEC) and Cartagena and Nagoya Protocols and BCH National Focal Point.	National Project Coordinator (NPC)
Thais Narciso	UN Environment Programme, Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, Panama	Project Task Manager at the Implementing Agency (IA);
Maria Abogado (<i>till Feb 2021</i>) and Yamel Pérez (<i>from Mar 2021 onward</i>)	UNDP, Venezuela	Project Managers at the Funding agency (FA)

Table 7. Calendar of Mid-Term Review main activities

Dates	Activities
January 11, 2021	Starting date of the MTR
From January 12 onward	Communications (e-mails and Zoom meetings) with NPC, UN Environment Programme and UNDP Project Task Managers; request of Project documents and contacts of informed persons
January 26	Kick-off meeting (via Zoom) with the Project Team
January 28	Anubis Induction (Zoom meeting) with UN Environment Programme Project Assistant on the Project Document Repository
February 2-18	Interviews (via Zoom or Whatsapp) with Project Consultants
February 19	Inception Report sent to Project Team
February 26	Presentation of the Survey to Project Team
March 3	Recap meeting (via Zoom) with Head and Deputy of the Project NEA
March 5	Launch of the Survey
From March 6 onward	Additional Interviews (via Zoom or Whatsapp) with persons informed on the Project
March 31	Closure of the Survey
April 26	Project Team videoconference (via Zoom): Presentations of preliminary findings notes
April 27	Draft Report of the Mid-Term Review sent to Project Team
April 27 – May 7	Allocated time for the Project Team to send their comments and suggestions for integration into the final report.
12 May 2021	Ending date of the MTR and Final Report of the Mid-Term Review sent to Project Team

IV. REVIEW METHODS

61. A huge limit of a remotely conducted MTR is the heavy dependency on the local Project team in the identification of the information sources: both in terms of *who* and *how* to contact for the interviews, or for sending the invitations to take the survey, or for identifying *which* documents are relevant to establish *what* problems or challenges the Project is facing, or for assessing Project performance. A big thank, in this context, goes to the NPC and all MINEC, UNDP and UN Environment Programme staff who clearly took responsibility of their focal roles in this process and have been extremely helpful in assisting the reviewer in this identification process.

62. The information sources, on which this review is based, are: a) a desk review of all official, and some unofficial, project-related documents; b) audio/video interviews with all major Project actors; and c) the results of an online survey targeting the largest possible number of persons who have been in touch with the Project so far.

Project-related documents

63. Main source of Project documents has been the UNEP *Anubis* centralized Project Management System, containing all official documentation produced on the Project since its inception. Further documents were gathered thanks to the UNDP office in Venezuela (mainly financial reports and Project contracts) and from the GEF Project Database. The NEA office kindly integrated the available documentation with most of the documents and presentations produced along the Project life, and with copies of the main inter-institutional correspondence aimed to create awareness, as well as requesting active participation in Project initiatives to the relevant Ministries and offices of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Additional sources of documentation have been the reports of the Project hired consultants, relevant national legislation and some publications on the main Project subject produced by local professionals. A list of all consulted documents is available in Annex III.

Interviews

64. The first and main subjects of the MTR interviews were the members of the Project Team, the staff of the two supporting UN agencies, the consultants hired by the Project and the civil servants who contributed to the Project activities. Additional interviewees were selected among the respondents to the survey who claimed a strong knowledge of the Project or a significant participation to some of the main Project activities. Several relevant representatives of the other four National Competent Authorities, identified by the decree establishing the CNB, were also contacted and asked for interviews, but none of the invitations received a substantive follow-up.

65. All interviews were carried-on through the *Zoom* or *Whatsapp* Internet platforms, mostly with video and audio support (apart from few cases in which poor Internet connection didn't allow for the video support). Also, in consideration of the scarce Internet connection available in some locations, MINEC staff proved extremely helpful in providing assistance to some of the interviewees in contacting the reviewer through the use of media located in their own facility. The total number of persons interviewed was 20 and a list containing their names, occupations and roles in the Project activities is available in Annex II.

Online survey

66. An online survey, aimed to all people who had come into contact with the Project, was launched at the beginning of March 2021 and kept active for about a month. Main objective of the survey was to gather feedback from a wider audience than the group of persons interviewed.

67. The list of e-mail addresses, used for the invitation to participate in the survey, was mainly provided by the NEA and, among others, the final list included all consultants and/or professionals who carried-on activities related to the Project as well as additional contacts indicated by the interviewees as persons informed on the Project.

68. A copy of the survey full text, along with explanations about the flow of the questions and a link to the draft online version, was shared with the Project Team one week before its launch and received positive comments.

69. The access of to the survey was set as semi-anonymous, meaning that the participants' email addresses were requested at the beginning of the process to avoid data entries by unsolicited people; however the identity of the participants was not taken into consideration in the analysis of the responses. On the other hand, the final section of the survey offered the participants the possibility to voluntarily enter their contact details and express their availability for online interviews.

70. The total number of persons invited to take the survey was 238; the number of e-mail that resulted reaching the targets after several verifications was 210 (88% of the initial target); and a total of 71 valid responses, representing the 34% of the initial target, were obtained through the survey.

71. A copy of the survey full text, with English translation, explanations about the survey structure and a detailed discussion of the survey results, is available in Annex V.

V. REVIEW FINDINGS

A. Strategic Relevance

i. Alignment to the UN Environment Programme Medium Term Strategy and Programme of Work

72. In accordance with UN Environment Programme *Medium Term Strategy* (MTS) this Project was designed to *set up effective laws, policies and institutions to govern actions that affect the environment*. Its objective, in line with the national environmental strategy, has direct relevance to MTS objectives such as *halting biodiversity loss, build adequate and effective governance structures and normative and policy foundations; and reduce environmental risks and increase the resilience of societies and the environment as a whole*. The Project objective also aims, among other things, to *align environmental governance structures to the challenges of global sustainability and integrating social, environmental and economic objectives in sustainable development policies*.

73. The Project is also in line with the Sub-programmes 3 (*Healthy and productive ecosystems*) and 4 (*Environmental governance*) of the UN Environment *Programme of Work for the Biennium 2018-2019*.

ii. Alignment to UN Environment Programme / GEF / Donor Strategic Priorities

74. The Project objective is aimed to fully contribute to all five *Strategic Objectives* set by the current *Strategic Plan for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety 2010-2020* and in particular to its *Operational Objectives* 1.1, 2.1-3, 2.5-7, 3.1 and 4.1-3. The Project objective is therefore in line with the *Strategic Plan* and, accordingly, with GEF 7 Biodiversity Strategy.

75. The full alignment of this Project with the objectives of the current CPB *Strategic Plan* is also a guarantee of its alignment to both UN Environment Programme and GEF main strategic priorities. The inter-exchange of biosafety regional experts and the participation of the NEA staff to biosafety training in the Latin American region, as part of the Project funded activities, is a good example too of the implementation of the principles of both the UN Environment

Programme Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building and the Strategy for South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

iii. Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities

76. Venezuela is one of the biodiversity-richest countries of the world, with a particular focus on endemic biodiversity, and the UN Environment Programme *World Conservation Monitoring Centre* included Venezuela in the list of the *17 megadiverse countries* of the world. In this context, the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has repeatedly expressed its concern about the potential negative impact of biotechnology on native species and the *National Strategy for the Conservation of Biological Diversity* states that *genetically modified organisms (GMOs) pose a threat to the conservation of Biological Diversity, due to the potential contamination, through gene transfer, of native species or varieties*.

77. The implementation of a NBF emerges, therefore, as the next logical step needed by the environmental policy of the Government of the *Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*, in this specific thematic area, after the ratifications of both the *Cartagena* and the *Nagoya Protocols* (respectively in 2002 and 2018); the elaboration of a *Draft National Biosafety Framework* (developed under the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Project in 2005); the re-establishment by national decree of the *National Biosafety Commission* (2006); the ratification of the *National Legal Framework on Biological Diversity* (2008); and the elaboration of the above mentioned *National Strategy 2010-2020 for the Conservation of Biological Diversity* (approved in 2010).

78. A further significance to the implementation of this national framework is also given by the choice of the Government of Venezuela, clearly expressed in the draft NBF and supported by the current workplan, to implement a *single-centralized window system* for managing all administrative procedures and commercial requests related to LMOs in compliance with the CPB and in line with the national *Law for the Simplification of Administrative Procedures* (2008).

79. This Project is therefore potentially well suited to the priorities and policies of the recipient Government, and has been strongly supported by MINEC, acting as the Project NEA.

80. In considering the environmental progresses of the region it is noted that, according to the *GEF Project Database*, 11 Projects for the implementation of NBFs (including Venezuela) have been approved in the GRULAC region since GEF-2 period, of which 5 have been completed (between GEF-2 and GEF-4 periods).

81. Moreover, according to the CPB *Fourth National Report* (2019), 13 countries in the South-America region are Parties to the CPB and only two of them declared having *introduced the necessary national measures for the implementation of the Protocol*; as for the other Parties in the region: ten Parties (including Venezuela) declared that *national measures are partially in place* and one Party declared that *only draft measures exist*.

82. Venezuela is therefore in line within the efforts of its region in building up the NBFs demanded by the CPB and most of the CPB Parties of the region are similarly still working on this specific objective, mainly with the help of GEF Projects.

iv. Complementarity with Existing Interventions

83. The current Project is considered the natural continuation of the previous Project for the *Development of a Draft National Biosafety Framework*, managed under the UNEP-GEF Global Project and completed in 2005.

84. In considering the significant interval between the two Projects, the entire workplan developed under this Project is adequately aligned to the results of the previous Project.

Rating for Strategic Relevance:	Satisfactory
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B. Quality of Project Design

85. All Project Expected Outcomes and Outputs contained in the workplan are all fully in line with the Project objective. However, for some of the identified Outputs there are no conclusive actions specified in the list of activities.

86. In looking, as an example, to Component 1 (*Completion and operation of biosafety legal framework*), some of the Outputs are clearly linked to conclusive activities (e.g. 1.1.1.d *Publication of the national BS policy*; or 1.1.2.c *Publication of the BS act*), while other Outputs are only related to consultative activities without specifying how to reach a final institutional approval of the regulatory documents. For example: Output 1.1.4 (*Guidelines and procedural manuals for LMO users, including importers / exporters, producers, processing industry and researchers*) is only related to the single activity 1.1.4.a (*Consultancy to develop guidelines and procedures as per output*); similarly Output 1.1.5 (*Administrative and technical forms for LMO applications*) is related to an analogous consultancy (activity 1.1.5.a) and to activity 1.1.5.b (*Meetings to socialize forms to NCA*).

87. The same applies to Component 2 (*Development of appropriate institutional and human capacity for decision-making and regulatory compliance in biosafety*) where no final activity, aimed to reach an institutional or administrative approval, is mentioned for its related Output 2.1.1 (*Centralized administrative system to handle applications with LMOs including a "single-centralized window"*).

88. It is noted that the absence of conclusive activities in the workplan might be cause, at the end of the Project, of conflicting considerations in the evaluation of its results, because the successful completion of the planned activities foreseen by the workplan might not provide an effective accomplishment of the outcomes and outputs related to these activities.

89. An even wider gap, between Expected Outcomes and planned activities, is noted under Component 3 of the workplan (*Development of appropriate capacities for public participation in decision-making*) and, specifically in the activities related to Outcome 3.2 (*Public participation in decision-making processes on LMOs is promoted and systematized*) and its related Outputs.

90. Under Expected Outcome 3.2, in fact, both the activities foreseen by the workplan: 3.2.1.a (*Consultancy for the development of a Q&A system and portal for public opinion on the NCA's website*), and 3.2.2.a (*6 Discussion forums with the private sector to exchange views and queries*) do not imply institutional progresses toward the effective accomplishment of the Outcome and, in particular, do not specifically lead toward the implementation of this important component of the NBF, which is mandatorily required by Art. 23 of the CPB.

91. More in general, on the Expected Outcomes 3.2, the Project design lacks of an in-depth stakeholder analysis and, so far, the involvement of organized groups of stakeholders has been more or less casual and without any real attempt of either empowering these groups or laying the foundations for consulting the public in the decision-making process regarding living modified organisms (LMOs) as clearly requested by Art. 23 of the CPB.

92. It is also noted that two, out of the three foreseen consultancies yet to be assigned in the workplan, refers to *Public Perception* (Component 2) and *Public Awareness* (activity 3.1.2.a) and that the only activities so far conducted under the Project in this area, have been aimed at creating general awareness about the Project, but not yet aimed to *empower stakeholders to support informed decision-making*.

Rating for Quality of Project Design: Moderately Unsatisfactory

C. Nature of External Context

93. The period in which this Project is being implemented coincides with a stage of extreme difficulties for the population of Venezuela. While specific factors affecting Project

performance are discussed in this report along with the relevant evaluation criteria, it is important to stress that the impact of hyper-inflation, increasing currency substitution, international economic sanctions, socio-political unrest and COVID-19 on-going pandemic, is taking a very heavy toll on the whole national capacity to implement an environmental institutional framework such as the one demanded by the Project.

Rating for Nature of External Context: Unfavourable

D. Effectiveness

94. As mentioned in the *Project Overview* section, this Project has accumulated, for reasons mostly independent from the NEA, an extreme delay vs. its original workplan and a further and robust revision of the last approved timeline, and possibly a deadline extension, would be needed soon. In addition to the unfavourable nature of external context, this Project is also facing serious problems related to inter-institutional engagement due to the lack of involvement of the other Ministries of the Government (see *Likelihood of Impact* section below).

95. As a direct consequence of the above, *none* of the Expected Outcomes and Outputs defined in the workplan has been fully achieved to date, and most of the remaining activities of the workplan will have to be reconsidered, according to the extent of the possible time extension that the Project might be granted, in order to produce quality results.

96. Under this section (and under the following sections on *Efficiency* and *Sustainability*) some results of the survey will be discussed when considered relevant. A more specific and in-depth analysis of the survey results is available in Annex V.

i. Achievement of Outputs

97. The Project workplan (available in details in Annex IV), foresees four substantive components plus an operational one related to monitoring and evaluation and Project operations. Under the four substantive components, 8 Outcomes and 16 Outputs are listed and, as mentioned, *none* of them has been finalized yet.

98. Most of the activities listed in the workplan refer either to consultancies (aimed to produce draft substantive documents) or meetings (aimed to share the products of the consultancies with the main institutional stakeholders). Generally speaking, most of the consultancies planned have been terminated, while very few consultative meetings have been hold and no inter-institutional agreement has been reached so far.

99. Under Component 1 (*Completion and operation of biosafety legal framework*), the workplan lists five Expected Outputs as the needed regulatory tools of the national biosafety framework:

Output 1.1.1 A National Policy Document on Biosafety.

A Draft National Policy on Biosafety has been produced as a part of a consultancy.

Output 1.1.2 A National Biosafety legislation in connection with existing laws.

Two draft documents have been produced: 1) a review of the sectorial regulations of the different NCAs in relation to public policies and national laws that regulates biosafety in the country, and 2) a draft on the development of sectorial norms/regulations and guidelines for the management of LMOs and associated information.

Output 1.1.3 Sectorial Rules/Resolutions and Guidelines for the management of LMOs.

Three documents were produced through consultancies: 1) a guide for the evaluation and risk analysis of LMOs, taking as reference the Venezuelan national legislation and with a Guide: case study of hypothetical release of a LMO in the field; 2) a practical guide to detect genetically modified organisms (GMOs) using immunoassay-based methods; and 3) a report on protocols for standardization and validation of methodologies for the detection of genetically modified organisms.

Output 1.1.4 Guidelines and Procedural Manuals for LMO users, including importers/exporters, producers, processing industry and researchers.

Draft proposals of flow charts of processes/methodologies were produced through consultancies in several areas (technological, risk analysis, ethical and social) and aimed at users including importers/exporters, producers, processing industry and researchers.

Output 1.1.5 Administrative and Technical Forms for LMO applications.

A consultancy produced a group of administrative and technical draft forms for LMO applications, aimed at different users, including importers/exporters, producers, processing industry and researchers.

100. None of the above documents, produced through consultancies, has been officially validated yet at NEA level or shared with the other Ministries identified by the Venezuela regulatory framework as the other National Competent Authorities (NCAs) in matters related to LMOs and biosafety.

101. The quality of most of the documents produced through consultancies is generally good/high and mostly in line with the demanded outputs. One notable exception is the *Guide for the evaluation and risk analysis of LMOs* (produced under Output 1.1.3), which deals with the risk assessment of LMOs only from an economic point of view and it is, therefore, not in line with Art. 15 of the CPB, requiring risk assessments to be *carried out in a scientifically sound manner, in accordance with Annex III and taking into account recognized risk assessment techniques*.

102. Under Component 2 (*Development of appropriate institutional and human capacity for decision-making and regulatory compliance in biosafety*), the workplan lists the following five Expected Outputs:

Output 2.1.1 A Centralized Administrative System to handle applications with LMOs including a "single-centralized window".

Though the *Administrative and technical forms for GMO applications* produced under Output 1.1.5 are supposed to be the basis of an inter-institutional discussion under this topic, the lack of engagement by the other NCAs hindered any further progress under this Output.

Output 2.1.2 A Technical Secretariat of the National Biosafety Committee created with specialized technical personnel.

No progresses are registered under this Output due to the non-existence of the National Biosafety Committee (i.e. CNB);

Output 2.2.1 Evaluation Processes of Environmental and Health Risks validated by the National Authorities responsible for different uses of LMOs.

No evaluation or validation process of the related draft documents produced under Component 1 has taken place so far, due to the lack of involvement of the other NCAs.

Output 2.3.1 *Specialized personnel trained to perform the tasks of monitoring and detection of LMOs at sea ports, airports and customs checkpoints.*

A workshop on *Preventive maintenance and management of the existing equipment in the Laboratory* was held in August 2019 with a group of 6 participants (2 from MINEC and 4 from the UCV); in October 2019, a group of 4 Project professionals participated in a training at the *National Reference Centre for the Detection of Genetically Modified Organisms*, in Mexico, in order to acquire knowledge in the analysis and evaluation of applications for release permits.

Output 2.3.2 *Mechanisms established for Risk Control and Management, including technology and methods for LMO traceability/detection, and contingency protocols for emergency response in case of accidents involving LMOs.*

Though the *Guide to detect genetically modified organisms using immunoassay-based methods*, produced under Output 1.1.3, is supposed to be the basis of an inter-institutional discussion under this topic, the lack of engagement by the other NCAs hindered any further progress under this Output.

103. Under Component 3 (*Development of appropriate capacities for public participation in decision-making*), the workplan lists the following four Expected Outputs:

Output 3.1.1 *Surveys and Trend Analysis on the level of information, awareness and changes in public opinion about biotechnology, biosafety and LMOs.*

No survey has been distributed to the general public yet.

Output 3.1.2 *National Public Awareness and Information on LMOs and biotechnology, including dissemination through websites.*

A Project website has been developed (see below), but no information on its existence or how to reach it has been circulated among the general public yet.

Output 3.2.1 *Participation Structures and Mechanisms as part of authorization process of LMOs, including a Claims Desk and Question and Answers system.*

A form to contact the Project staff and a survey about general awareness on biotechnology are included in the Project website (see below); no system for *consulting the public in the decision-making process regarding LMOs* or for *making the results of such decisions available to the public* (as for CPB Art. 23) have been developed so far.

Output 3.2.2 *Discussion Forums with the private sector to exchange views and queries.*

Face-to-face surveys have been directed to various actors in at least 4 target groups and 2 pilot discussion forums have been held and served as feedback for the development of informative materials within the framework of the Project; based on the above, a forum was designed in order to be used in the future through the Project website. [Source: PIR, no further supporting document available].

Output 3.3.1 *Up to date sectorial information regarding LMOs presented and/or authorized by the country.*

A database with reference information on LMOs contained in food is under preparation [Source: PIR, no further supporting document available].

104. Generally speaking, most of the activities related to Component 3 rotate around the publication of awareness material and interactive forms supposedly distributed through the

Project website. Unfortunately this website, though available on internet since December 2020 (at <https://ovm.3dimensional.agency/>), has not been advertised or promoted to the wide public yet and, as far as this review could ascertain, it appears to be parked on the internet domain of a private digital marketing agency while waiting final set-up and definitive location on the MINEC server.

105. The above website hosts pages addressing several categories of information: a) general information about Venezuela biodiversity; b) information about the Project workplan; c) a biotechnology glossary; d) information about the CPB; e) information about national and international legislation on biosafety; f) general information about the reference laboratory for the detection of LMOs (this section is planned to include, in the future, information on training offered by the lab as well application forms for the above activities); g) a set of questions and answers on LMOs; h) a survey asking the respondent to state his/her agreement on about 15 general statements on LMOs; i) a form for contacting the Project staff and submit questions.

106. While a useful tool for creating public awareness, once effectively used to reach the wide public, this website, as it is, does not specifically address the *development of appropriate capacities for public participation in decision-making* that constitute the focus of Component 3.

107. Under Component 4 (*Strengthening of infrastructure for the detection and management of LMOs*), the workplan lists one single outputs:

Output 4.1.1 An operational laboratory that has the necessary infrastructure to carry out analysis and detection of LMOs, which allows Venezuela to meet its obligations under the CPB.

The laboratory is currently being equipped and MINEC personnel being trained. A more detailed discussion on these specific activities is provided under Outcome 4.1 below.

ii. Achievement of Direct Outcomes

108. The Project Component 1 (*Completion and operation of biosafety legal framework*) foresees only one Expected Outcome:

Outcome 1.1 A Regulatory biosafety framework completed, adopted and integrated within the National Strategy for the Conservation of Biodiversity 2010-2020 and its National Action Plan.

109. In consideration of the current inter-institutional isolation of the NEA in the implementation of the Project, this Outcome appears to be one of the most difficult to achieve. The adoption and integration into national strategies and plans of a highly political documents, like those expected for the adoption of the NBF, will, in fact, require a series of necessary high level discussions and, eventually, political agreements at least among the five Ministries currently designated by law as NCAs in the area of LMOs and biosafety.

110. It is recognized that the NEA has been investing some time and efforts in attempting to enhance inter-institutional engagement. Two preparatory meetings were, in fact, organized targeting specific representatives of some of the other Ministries, in order to possibly convene later a meeting of the *Steering Committee*; unfortunately these efforts did not succeed and no representative to the Committee was ever appointed.

111. Out of the 71 participants to the online survey, launched during this MTR, 37 respondents (representing 52.1% of the participants) declared having had an active role in the project implementation and 6 respondents (8.4%) declared having had a most direct input to Component 1. This latter group of respondents rated, on average, the achievement of Outcome 1.1, on a scale from 0 (min) to 5 (max), as 2.3 and the achievements of the Expected Outputs from a minimum of 1.8 (for Output 1.1.3) to a maximum of 3.5 (for Output 1.1.1). In their comments under this section, most of the respondents highlighted the need for a higher

political support to achieve the Expected Outcome and the need for ensuring continuity with the workshops organized so far.

112. Under Component 2 (*Development of appropriate institutional and human capacity for decision-making and regulatory compliance in biosafety*) three Outcomes are expected:

Outcome 2.1 The institutional and administrative framework is reinforced to provide effective responses to LMO applications and communicate decisions in line with the CPB;

Outcome 2.2 There is greater human capacity, clarity, scientific and technological bases to make decisions regarding LMOs;

Outcome 2.3 There is greater human capacity, clarity, scientific and technology to control/monitor activities with LMOs in the country

113. For Outcome 2.1, the same inter-institutional isolation problem of Component 1 applies: as of today, there is no visible political support from the other NCAs and no success was obtained by the NEA in its past efforts toward involving them in taking part to the NBF discussions.

114. Outcomes 2.2. and 2.3, on the other hand, are *more likely* to be achieved by the NEA alone, mainly because of the very competent team of scientists, mostly involved in scientific research and teaching at the UCV, who were contacted by the Project for consultancies and/or the setting-up of the Reference Laboratory (see considerations on the Outcome of Component 4 below).

115. The Project workplan foresees training activities in several areas and the activities run so far have clearly shown the existence of a critical mass of persons with the necessary scientific knowledge to achieve these two Outcomes. It will be up to the NEA (and possibly, in the future, to the CNB) to determine how to further involve these important assets in the operations of the NBF.

116. On the achievement of Component 2 objective, two relevant considerations apply: a) the need to reach a political consensus on how to run decision-making and monitoring systems at national level (discussed, more in detail, under the *Likelihood of Impact* sub-section); and b) the need to face the current weakness of the local currency and the concurrent increasing currency substitution (dollarization) of the country labor market (discussed, more in detail, under the *Sustainability* sub-section).

117. Out of the 71 participants to the online survey, 8 (11.3% of the respondents) declared having had an active role in the project implementation and a most direct input to Component 2. This group of respondents rated, on average, the achievements of the Expected Outcomes under this Component, on a scale from 0 (min) to 5 (max), from a minimum of 3.1 (for Outcome 2.3) to a maximum of 3.8 (for Outcome 2.2) and the achievements of the Expected Outputs from a minimum of 2.0 (for Output 2.3.2) to a maximum of 2.5 (for Output 2.2.1). In their comments under this section, the respondents highlighted the needs for a better risk assessment system and for implementing the *single-centralized window system* for managing all administrative procedures.

118. Under Component 3 (*Development of appropriate capacities for public participation in decision-making*), three Outcomes are expected:

Outcome 3.1 Increase the level of public understanding of biosafety through operations based on participatory diagnosis;

Outcome 3.2 Public participation in decision-making processes on LMOs is promoted and systematized;

Outcome 3.3 A coordinated governmental system for public access to information on biosafety is supported in accordance with Article 20 of the CPB.

119. As mentioned under the *Quality of Project Design* section above, this Component is the less developed so far by the Project and, while public awareness (relevant to Outcomes 3.1 and 3.3) is addressed in terms of future planned activities, there is no provision or planned activity in the Project aimed to empower the public to take part *in decision-making processes on LMOs or to promote and systematize* this participation, as foreseen by Outcome 3.2 and requested by Art. 23 of the CPB.

120. Out of the 71 participants to the online survey, 9 (12.7% of the respondents) declared having had an active role in the project implementation and a most direct input to Component 3. This group of respondents rated, on average, the achievements of the Expected Outcomes under this Component, on a scale from 0 (min) to 5 (max), from a minimum of 3.0 (for Outcome 3.1) to a maximum of 3.3 (for Outcome 3.3) and the achievements of the Expected Outputs from a minimum of 2.3 (for Output 3.2.2) to a maximum of 3.0 (for Output 3.1.2). In their comments under this section, the respondents highlighted the need for promoting the Project website and strengthening the informative campaign.

121. Under Component 4 (*Strengthening of infrastructure for the detection and management of LMOs*), only one Outcome is expected:

Outcome 4.1 Equip and operate the Reference Laboratory for Detection of LMOs of the Ministry of Popular Power for the Environment, the lead agency for Biosafety in Venezuela, responsible for supervision and control of LMOs in the country.

122. More than 40% of the whole GEF contribution to the Project budget is allocated for the achievement of this Expected Outcome and much effort has been dedicated by the NEA in its realization.

123. As for interviews with NPC, NEA's heads and personnel, consultants and other scientists who have contributed to this effort, the infrastructure of the lab has been totally renovated, the requested equipment is finally reaching the lab in these months (after a very long purchasing process, mostly due to international sanctions and substantial difficulties in the procurement process by the FA), and laboratory supply has been finally ordered. Also notably, collaboration with the UCV has generated useful data on the standardization of equipment for DNA extraction through a master thesis dedicated to this theme.

124. According to all interviewees, the lab has great potentialities to place itself strategically in the field of *LMO detection* at national level and the planned Project activities seems to go in this direction. Also in this case, important *Sustainability* considerations are deemed appropriate and will be discussed in the specific sub-section further below.

125. Out of the 71 participants to the online survey, 14 (19.7% of the respondents) declared having had an active role in the project implementation and a most direct input to Component 4. This group of respondents rated, on average, the achievements of the Outcome 4.1 under this Component, on a scale from 0 (min) to 5 (max), as 3.1 and the achievements of the Output 4.1.1 as 3.2. Most comments, under this section focused on the slowness of the laboratory implementation.

iii. Likelihood of Impact

126. The overall objective of the Project is to *establish a platform of legislative, regulatory, social and infrastructure to implement the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB) in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in order to contribute to the global conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity*. The establishment, at a national level, of a *platform of legislative, regulatory, social and infrastructure* is an action requiring *Government* decisions and the NEA main roles are to lead this process by managing the available resources, empowering

all the necessary stakeholders, and coordinate their contributions in order to reach the overall objective.

127. However, all the other relevant Ministries of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, notwithstanding the repeated requests by MINEC, have not appointed, as of today, their representatives to the Project *Steering Committee*, which consequently has never met. The same political absence of nation-wide ownership and driven-ness on this topic has been made evident, on a wider scale in the *non-existence* of the *National Biosafety Commission* (CNB), established in 2003, and then restructured in its composition in 2006 by executive decrees.

128. The CNB, as mentioned, never hold a meeting due to the lack of appointment, to date, of its representatives by the other four Ministries, listed together with MINEC as the NCAs (i.e. Ministries of Health, Nutrition, Science and Technology, and Agriculture and Land), as well as by the other designated member institutions (Ministry for Industry and Trade, industry and trade private sector, University and public education, small and medium-sized agricultural enterprises, large agricultural producers, and organized communities).

129. The absence of both the *Steering Committee* at the Project level, and of the CNB at the institutional level, is most probably to be considered a direct consequence of the difficult situation the country is experiencing in the present times (as mentioned in the *Nature of External Context* section, above), as well of the somehow related very high rate of political turnover at the level of the Ministers of the Republic that has incurred in the past 5 years at the Government level. In any case, this situation has *de facto* reduced the whole Project to a single-ministry initiative and deprived it, so far, of the wider political support that is deemed necessary, in most countries, to transform a draft legal and administrative outline into an approved and functional national framework.

130. Since the inception of this review, several attempts were made by the consultant to encourage the NEA in facilitating interviews with the representatives of the different NCAs; eventually, direct invitations for interviews were sent directly by the consultant to some key actors in the four different Ministries/NCAs (Health, Nutrition, Science and Technology, and Agriculture and Land). Out of the ten persons suggested by the NEA for this purpose, only two replied, clearly admitting of not knowing any details of the NBF Project and, in both cases, did not follow up with the consultant's request for an interview.

131. As far as this review has been able to ascertain, all Project activities conducted to date have been only effective in producing results identified and managed by the NEA alone. The institutional stakeholders, clearly identified, by the decree establishing the *National Biosafety Commission*, as the National Competent Authorities (NCAs) in all matters concerning LMOs and biosafety, have been totally absent in the whole process. This absence reduces the relevant products, of most of the Project activities conducted so far, to mere proposals that could just be offered to the other NCAs as the basis of a discussion that has not started yet.

132. The likelihood of the Project to make a substantive contribution to the high level changes requested by the Project overall objective depend now, among other things, from the capacity of the NEA to effectively involve the other institutional stakeholders, namely the four NCAs listed above, in a common Project, led by MINEC and aimed to build together the Venezuela NBF.

133. In discussing the likelihood of Project impact, it is also relevant to underline the systematic absence, so far, of activities aimed at effectively empowering the non-institutional stakeholders (such as environmental associations, farmers, indigenous groups, the industry sector, import-export organizations, custom control, members of the food distribution chain etc.). With the important exception of the scientific community, in fact, the Project has failed so far to address the national community at large, including private sector and civil society, and though the creation of general awareness is foreseen in planned activities, no Project

activity is aimed, thus far, to achieve the provision of Art. 23 of the CPB, reflected in the Project Outcome 3.2, requiring that *Public participation in decision-making processes on LMOs is promoted and systematized*.

134. Survey results, confirm that very few persons, outside of the group of people actively involved in its implementation, know about the Project and that even those persons belong to a very narrow niche limited to Governmental Institutions and/or the academic/scientific community (these data from the survey are presented in more details under the description of *Group 3* in Annex V).

135. The successful involvement of both institutional and non-institutional stakeholders, in all relevant Project activities, is indicated as a necessary requisite for the Project to accomplish its overall objective. As long as these absences remain, the likelihood of the intended positive impacts foreseen by the Project remains very low.

136. In consideration of the unfavourable nature of the external context, the overall rating for Effectiveness is increased from *Highly Unsatisfactory* to *Unsatisfactory*.

Rating for Effectiveness: Unsatisfactory

E. Financial Management

137. All financial reports appear complete and coherent with the approved workplan; all set of *Combined Delivery Report By Project* (provided by UNDP) and *Periodic Expenditures Report* (made available by UN Environment Programme through the Anubis centralized Project Management System) show regular expenditures from both the *GEF Trust* and *Government Cofinancing allocation* (with a slight decrement of the latter in the year 2020, most probably due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic). A summary of the reported expenditures, by year, of both GEF Trust and Government Cofinancing allocation is provided in *Table 8*.

Table 8. Annual Expenditures reported by year with percentages of the Total estimated Project cost

Year	GEF Trust Fund (USD)		Cofinancing (USD)		Total (USD)	
2017	67.366	(4%)	581.800	(28%)	649.166	(17%)
2018	170.534	(9%)	380.803	(18%)	551.337	(14%)
2019	189.151	(10%)	482.500	(23%)	671.651	(17%)
2020*	210.019	(11%)	163.085	(8%)	373.104	(9%)
Total Expenditure Reported	637.070	(34%)	1.608.188	(78%)	2.245.258	(57%)
Total Estimated Project Cost	1.860.000	(100%)	2.072.000	(100%)	3.932.000	(100%)

(* *Periodic Expenditures Reports for the second semester of 2020 have not been validated yet by the Implementing Agency.*

138. As mentioned in the *Project Overview* section, the Project finance has experienced serious financial problems, in its first two years, due to macro-economic measures (i.e. hyperinflation) and increasing currency substitution (i.e. dollarization). As mentioned in the ToRs for this review: *after a long negotiation process with UNDP headquarters, the consultants' contracts were finally cancelled and later reissued with a change in the currency of payment from Bolívares*

to US dollars. This led to a long period of close to no execution of GEF funds in the 2018-2019 financial year.

139. With the exception of the above problem, finally solved in 2019, there have been only two other financial issues reported by the different Project actors and have been both caused by delays.

140. In particular, the procurement process of the laboratory equipment took a very long time (about 60 weeks, according to PIR); the UNDP Project task manager explained this delay by highlighting problems in coping with the international economic sanctions against Venezuela, the consequent difficulties in dealing with USA equipment suppliers, the limited staff of the Venezuela UNDP office and the very specific and specialized type of equipment requested for a biotech lab.

141. Other delays have been reported by the Implementing Agency in receiving the NEA quarterly reports; however, after the first year of Project activities, when the average interval between the end date of the reporting cycle and the final report validation was over 4.5 months, the average time of this interval appears to have been reduced significantly.

142. In terms of quality of the reports, both the Financing and the Implementing agencies have confirmed a good level of compliance with the relevant UN financial management standards and procedures.

Rating for Financial Management:	Satisfactory
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F. Efficiency

143. The unfavourable nature of the external context has played the most important role in affecting the Project timeline. Within this context, the NEA has managed to keep a very dedicated team in charge of the Project and has eventually coped well in obtaining the most immediate results both in terms of the products of the consultancies and the purchasing of the equipment for the Reference Laboratory.

144. However, in looking at the products obtained so far in terms of efficiency, it is impossible to ignore the considerations on the inter-institutional isolation of the NEA, mentioned under the *Likelihood of Impact* section, above. Though the NEA's efforts are recognized in the attempts of involving the other NCAs in the Project *Steering Committee*, the results obtained in this direction are non-existent and, eventually a new and more successful strategy will have to be devised in order to gain these other Ministries' support and participation.

145. The *National Biosafety Commission*, as the institutionally recognized advisor for the National Executive for the activities related to LMOs, biotechnology and biosafety, will necessarily have to take a substantial part in the final decisions about the NBF, in order to reach the Project objectives, and most of the products of the consultancies may, possibly, be challenged by the other members (e.g. by claiming the produced drafts do not take in due consideration their own priorities), once this discussion will eventually take place.

146. Most of respondents from the survey, in their comments on Component 1, highlighted the need of a higher political support to the matter and more than one person (both in the survey and in the interviews) stressed the high complexity of implementing the NBF legal framework.

147. At few months from the expected Project deadline, all the important and inter-institutional consultations about the national framework have still to be initiated; a Project extension is bound to be requested for the Project objective to be further pursued, and no progress on this important aspect has been reached so far.

148. While the NEA efforts and achievements are fully recognized in the day-by-day Project management, it is noted that not prioritizing the inter-institutional support, since Project inception, has been an inefficient strategy for the implementation of the Project, and eventually of the Venezuela NBF. It is also noted that this issue, if not dealt immediately and as a top priority, poses a very high risk to the successful completion of the Project.

149. In consideration of the unfavourable nature of the external context, the overall rating for Efficiency is increased from *Highly Unsatisfactory* to *Unsatisfactory*.

Rating for Efficiency:

Unsatisfactory

G. Monitoring and Reporting

i. Monitoring Design and Budgeting

150. The Project document contains a *Logical Framework* (in its *Annex A*), and a detailed *Monitoring and Evaluation budget and workplan* (in its *Annex G*).

151. The logical framework indicates for each Project component: a) Objectives, b) Outcomes and Outputs, c) Indicators, d) Baseline Conditions, e) Mid-term Targets, f) End of Project Targets, g) Means of Verification, and h) Assumptions. With the notable absence of any reference to the *Project Steering Committee* as a necessary component of the Project, the whole *logical framework* is well designed and provides a useful tool for keeping track of Project accomplishments.

152. *The Monitoring and Evaluation budget and workplan* is also very detailed and in line with Project requirements. It enlists and provide adequate budget for: a) inception & closure workshops (the first within 2 months of Project start-up); b) inception report (1 month after Project inception meeting); c) measurement of Project indicators including baseline data collection (within the first year of Project activity); d) Project Steering Committee meetings and reports (twice a year minimum); e) PIRs (annually); f) monitoring visits to field sites and areas where Project is active; g) MTR (at mid-point of Project); and h) terminal evaluation (TE, at Project end).

153. It is noted that the budget allocated for both *MTR* and *TE* has been revised and increased, consistently with similar UN Environment Programme projects, since Project approval.

ii. Monitoring Implementation

154. Once again it is considered appropriate to acknowledge that the unfavourable nature of the external context has played a very important role in heavily affecting the Project execution. In considering the already mentioned delays in both contracting and procurement, it might, in fact, have been inappropriate applying *Mid-Term Targets* to appraise results before the various consultancies had been terminated. It is also important to acknowledge the several attempts of NEA to involve the other NCAs as well as the repeated requests of the IA for the *Steering Committee* to meet.

155. It results difficult, therefore, to assess whether the monitoring system has been operational and effective. In any case, the tracking of results and progress towards Projects objectives has not managed, to date, in routing the Project course toward a more successful strategy to overcome political isolation. Furthermore, the whole initial timeline has been disrupted and will require a dedicated effort in rebuilding it, hopefully with the help of the *Steering Committee* and combined with an updated workplan, while considering: a) a time extension of the Project; b) new strategies for stakeholder's involvement; and c) an assessment of the remaining financial resources.

iii. Project Reporting

156. The UN Environment Programme centralized Project Management System named *Anubis* provides easy access to all Project documents through user-friendly web pages and offers the possibility to download any document in PDF format.

157. Through the *Anubis* platform it was possible to get access to Project details and contacts, initial documents, budget revisions, workplans, terms of references, contracts, inventories, cash advance authorizations, as well as to all periodic documents like PIRs and Periodic Expenditures Reports (in both detail and summary formats), all in line with UN Environment Programme reporting standards.

Rating for Monitoring and Reporting: Moderately Satisfactory

H. Sustainability

i. Socio-political sustainability

158. Without repeating here what already mentioned under the *Likelihood of Impact* section, it is noted that the Project has been unsuccessful, so far, in building up ownership, interest and commitment among other Government institutions and stakeholders, in order to take the Project achievements forwards. As mentioned, this situation is not sustainable and its resolution is suggested as a top priority in order to continue Project activities toward the implementation of a NBF.

ii. Financial sustainability

159. While the adoption of a biosafety legal framework and administrative regulation (Component 1 and 2 of the Project) will mainly require a wide political support for their approval, all other outputs foreseen by the Project will require a constant flow of relevant financial resources, in order to be kept functional after Project conclusion.

160. In particular, the maintenance of the Reference Laboratory (Component 4), with both its specialized personnel and its expensive set of equipment and consumables, as well as the continuous and specialized training of personnel performing risk assessment or the tasks of monitoring and detection of LMOs at sea ports, airports and customs checkpoints (Component 2), are considered expensive activities requiring a significant annual budget.

161. This issue, common to many internationally funded Projects, is extremely serious in Venezuela because of the current hyper-inflation and increasing use of a foreign currency in large portions of the country. The example of the Project consultants requiring to be paid in USD is a clear indicator of the current situation and, in interviews with representatives of the university sector, it was made very clear by the respondents that most of the scientific community would not be available to work in a government-funded laboratory should their salaries be paid in the national currency.

162. Interviewed on this specific issue, the Head of the NEA explained that there were plans under consideration, such as: a) providing the lab with a juridical status that would allow it offering paid services to the private market (i.e. LMOs detection) and using the income to pay the lab costs; and b) that the currency to be used for these services (and consequently to pay salaries to the lab staff), could be possibly identified with the *petro* (or *petromoneda*), a crypto-currency developed by the government of Venezuela, backed by the country's oil and mineral reserves and supposedly linked to a fixed exchange rate with the USD. Unfortunately, since its launch in February 2018, this first crypto-currency designed and created by a government world-wide seems not having met the interest of the international finance markets. Mainly due to its absence in the important exchanges, the *petro-salaries* might prove to be not enough a solid incentive to attract the scientific community in working

for the Government, unless the crypto-currency is used only as an administrative financial tool and used for fully paying salaries in foreign currency. It is worth noting, that in many comments received (both from the survey and the interviews), this issue was stressed as extremely relevant from the representatives of the academic/scientific community.

163. Lack of future financial support of both laboratory activities and personnel training is therefore to be considered a serious threat and pose a significant risk to the sustainability of these future Project Outcomes.

iii. Institutional sustainability

164. Each National Biosafety Framework, implemented so far world-wide, obviously reflects several important political choices of the respective Governments, related to their willingness to take or not advantage, and with which safety measures in place, from the products of biotechnology. This variability is moderated by being a Party to the CPB, ratified to date by 173 countries around the world, and providing an extremely solid institutional background to any Party's NBF.

165. Compliance with the CPB and adherence to its *Strategic Plan* have been the basis for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to request this Project to GEF and should be, supposedly, robust enough commitments to maintain the benefits associated with the Project outcomes after Project closure, if inter-institutional commitment is eventually reached.

Rating for Sustainability:	Unlikely
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VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

166. *The UN Environment Programme / GEF / MINEC Project for the Implementation of the National Biosafety Framework in Venezuela in Accordance to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety has been carried out, since its inception and for the past four years, in an unfavourable external context due to hyper-inflation, increasing currency substitution (i.e. dollarization), international economic sanctions, socio-political unrest and the COVID-19 on-going pandemic which have made it almost impossible for the NEA to cope with the initially agreed timeline and workplan or to achieve the Expected Outcomes and Outputs of the Project [Ref. Section IV-C on Nature of External Context].*

167. *The Project design is in line with UN Environment Programme, CPB, and GEF strategies and priorities and clearly reflects the intention of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to further implement its already developed Biodiversity Strategy [Ref. Section IV-A, on Strategic Relevance].*

168. *The Office of Integration and International Affairs of the Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism - MINEC, has a very relevant position in the Government in acting as the National Executing Agency (NEA) for this Project, being also the office of the GEF Operational Focal Point, and the CBD, CPB, Nagoya and BCH focal points [Ref. Para. 44-45].*

169. *All Project Expected Outcomes and Outputs contained in the workplan are fully in line with the Project objective. However, for some of the identified Outputs (i.e. Outputs 1.1.4, 1.1.5, and 2.1.1) there are no specifically conclusive actions enlisted and for one specific Outcome (i.e. Outcome 3.2) no specific finalization is planned [Ref. Section IV-B, on Quality of Project Design].*

170. *Mostly due to the unfavourable nature of the external context, this MTR occurs almost at the end of the estimated Project timeline, with 43% of the Project GEF Trust Fund disbursed*

and only half of the workplan activities completed (mainly consultancies) [Ref. Table 5 and Section IV-B, on Effectiveness].

171. *The NEA has been gathering a very dedicated and experienced team for the Project implementation and many of the activities foreseen in the workplan have been carried out with high level of professionalism and good quality of the results. Also in terms of administrative performance, the whole Project, in consideration of the unfavourable nature of the external context, has been carried out by MINEC in a satisfactory manner [Ref. Sections IV-E on Financial Management and IV-G on Monitoring and Reporting].*

172. *On the other hand, most of the informative meetings, public awareness related activities and all the inter-institutional consultations to reach consensus on the NBF have still to be initiated and it appear very unlikely for the Project to accomplish its objective without a time extension [Ref. Sub-section IV-D-i on Achievement of Outputs].*

173. *Moreover, the NEA has been unsuccessful, so far, in ensuring inter-institutional political support, in the implementation of the NBF, both at Project level and at a wider political level: in fact, the members of both the Project Steering Committee, foreseen by the Project Document, and the National Biosafety Commission, established by an executive decree in 2006, have never been appointed and neither the Committee nor the Commission have ever met. As long as these absences remain, the likelihood of the intended positive impacts foreseen by the Project remains very low [Ref. Sub-section IV-D-iii on Likelihood of Impact].*

174. *As a direct consequence of all the above, none of the Outputs and Outcomes defined in the workplan has been fully achieved yet, no institutional agreement has been reached and, most important no new strategy to overcome MINEC political isolation in the NBF implementation has been effectively devised and/or executed to date. It is observed that this issue, if not dealt immediately and as a top priority, poses a very high risk to the successful completion of the Project [Ref. Section IV-F on Efficiency].*

175. *In addition to the lack of inter-institutional support, the Project implementation is also currently affected by a lack of effectiveness in terms of communication and consultation with private and public stakeholders. Limited activities have been effectively executed aimed at sharing Project achievements and progresses with relevant stakeholder groups, however, there is no planned activity in the Project, aimed to empower the public to take part in decision-making processes on LMOs or to promote and systematize this participation as foreseen by Project Outcome 3.2 and requested by Art. 23 of the CPB [Ref. Sub-section IV-D-iii on Likelihood of Impact].*

176. *Survey results, confirm that very few persons, outside of the group of people actively involved in the implementation, know about the Project and that even those persons belong to a very narrow niche limited to Governmental Institutions and/or the academic/scientific community [Ref. Sub-section IV-D-iii on Likelihood of Impact and Annex V].*

177. *Finally, both the Socio-political and the Financial Sustainability risks of the Project are considered quite high, because: a) the Project has not been successful, so far, in building up ownership, interest and commitment among Government and other stakeholder groups to take the Project achievements forwards; and b) the lack of financial support of both laboratory activities and personnel training, after the Project conclusion, is a significant risk and no effective mitigation measures have been devised and/or initiated, as of to date [Ref. Sub-sections IV-H-i and IV-H-ii on Socio-political and Financial sustainability].*

178. *The Overall Rating of this Mid-Term Review for the Project is: **Moderately Unsatisfactory**. The ratings of the different evaluation criteria related to Project implementation are summarized in Table 9.*

Table 9. Summary of Performance Ratings

Evaluation Criteria	Summary Assessment	Rating
A. Strategic Relevance		Satisfactory
i. <i>Alignment to the UN Environment Programme Medium Term Strategy (MTS) and Programme of Work (POW)</i>	The Project is in line with <i>UN Environment Programme MTS, POW and CPB COP-MOP Recommendations.</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>
ii. <i>Alignment to UN Environment Programme / GEF / Donor Strategic Priorities</i>	The Project is in line with <i>GEF7 Biodiversity Strategy, CPB Strategic Plan 2020-2020, UN Environment Programme Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building, the Strategy for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, and the Sub-programmes 3 (Healthy and productive ecosystems) and 4 (Environmental governance) of the UN Environment Programme of Work for the Biennium 2018-2019.</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>
iii. <i>Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities</i>	The Project is relevant to <i>Venezuela National Strategy 2010-2020 for the Conservation of Biological Diversity (2020), to its Law for the Simplification of Administrative Procedures (2008); and the participation of Venezuela to CPB activities.</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>
iv. <i>Complementarity with Existing Interventions</i>	The Project, notwithstanding the long interval, is the logical continuation of the previous <i>UNEP-GEF Project for the Development of a Draft NBF</i> completed in 2005.	<i>Moderately Satisfactory</i>
B. Quality of Project Design	All Project <i>Expected Outcomes and Outputs</i> contained in the workplan are fully in line with the Project objective. However, for some of the identified Outcomes (1.1.4, 1.1.5, and 2.1.1) there are no specifically conclusive actions enlisted and for one specific Outcome (3.2) no finalization is planned.	Moderately Unsatisfactory
C. Nature of External Context	Hyper-inflation, increasing currency substitution, international economic sanctions, socio-political unrest and the COVID-19 on-going pandemic have created a very unfavourable context through which implementing the Project.	Unfavourable

Evaluation Criteria	Summary Assessment	Rating
D. Effectiveness		Unsatisfactory
<i>i. Achievement of Outputs</i>	None of the Outputs defined in the workplan has been fully achieved to date; most of the consultancies planned have been completed while very few consultative meetings have been hold and no inter-institutional agreement has been reached so far.	<i>Moderately Unsatisfactory</i>
<i>ii. Achievement of Direct Outcomes</i>	None of the Outcomes defined in the workplan has been fully achieved to date and no new strategy has been effectively devised to overcome political isolation problems.	<i>Unsatisfactory</i>
<i>iii. Likelihood of Impact</i>	NEA has been unsuccessful so far to ensure any form of inter-institutional political support both at Project level (absence of a <i>Steering Committee</i>) and at a wider political level (non-existence of the <i>National Biosafety Commission</i>); as long as these absences remain, the likelihood of the intended positive impacts of the Project, becoming a reality, remains very low.	<i>Unlikely</i>
E. Financial Management	All financial reports appear complete and coherent with the approved workplan; for most of the delays experimented in the past, causes have been analyzed and mitigation measures enacted.	Satisfactory
F. Efficiency	NEA efforts and achievement are fully recognized in the day-by-day Project management. The Project political isolation, however, pose a dangerous threat to the successful completion of the Project and no new strategy has been effectively devised to overcome this problem so far.	Unsatisfactory
G. Monitoring and Reporting		Moderately Satisfactory
<i>i. Monitoring Design and Budgeting</i>	The Project <i>Logical Framework</i> is well designed and provides a useful tool for keeping track of Project accomplishment; the <i>Monitoring and Evaluation budget and workplan</i> is also very detailed and in line with Project requirements.	<i>Satisfactory</i>

Evaluation Criteria	Summary Assessment	Rating
ii. <i>Monitoring Implementation</i>	In acknowledging a) the unfavourable nature of the external context, b) a number of NEA attempts to involve the other <i>National Competent Authorities</i> and c) the repeated requests of the IA for the <i>Steering Committee</i> to meet, it results difficult to assess whether the monitoring system was operational and effective; in any case the tracking of results and progress towards Projects objectives has not managed, to date, in routing the Project course toward a more successful strategy to overcome political isolation.	<i>Moderately Unsatisfactory</i>
iii. <i>Project Reporting</i>	Almost all Project documents are easily available from the UN Environment Programme centralized Project Management System named Anubis. All required reports are present and appear in compliance with the relevant UN financial management standards and procedures.	<i>Moderately Satisfactory</i>
H. Sustainability *		Unlikely
i. <i>Socio-political sustainability</i>	The Project has not been successful, so far, to build up ownership, interest and commitment among other governmental agencies and stakeholder groups in order to take the Project achievements forwards.	<i>Unlikely</i>
ii. <i>Financial sustainability</i>	Lack of future financial support for both laboratory activities and personnel training is considered a significant risk to the sustainability of future Project outcomes.	<i>Moderately Unlikely</i>
iii. <i>Institutional sustainability</i>	Compliance with the CPB and adherence to its Strategic Plan have been the basis for the Venezuela Government to request this Project to GEF; they are also, supposedly, robust enough commitments to maintain the benefits associated with the Project outcomes after Project closure, if inter-institutional commitment is eventually reached.	<i>Moderately Unlikely</i>
I. Factors and Processes Affecting Project Performance		Moderately Unsatisfactory
i. <i>Preparation and readiness</i>	Satisfactory financial measures were taken, though with considerable delay, to address the national hyper-inflation; no measures have been taken, to date, in addressing the lack of engagement with stakeholder groups.	<i>Moderately Unsatisfactory</i>

Evaluation Criteria	Summary Assessment	Rating
ii. <i>Quality of Project Implementation and Execution</i>	In general terms the Project has been provided with good quality services by the UN agencies. However, the Fund Management agency has accumulated relevant delays in both dealing with the national hyper-inflation and with procurement; and the Implementing agency has allowed the continuation of Project activities, for almost 4 years, without the supervision of a <i>Steering Committee</i> .	Moderately Satisfactory
iii. <i>Stakeholders participation and cooperation</i>	The Project is currently affected by a lack of effectiveness in terms of communication and consultation with institutional, private and public stakeholders; no strategy has been effectively devised so far to overcome this problem.	Unsatisfactory
iv. <i>Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity</i>	The Project reviewed gender-based engagement on biosafety and biodiversity policy as there are a number of gender-based targets under Component 3.	Moderately Satisfactory
v. <i>Country ownership and driven-ness</i>	NEA has been unsuccessful so far to ensure any form of inter-institutional political support both at Project level (absence of a <i>Steering Committee</i>) and at a wider political level (non-existence of the <i>National Biosafety Commission</i>); as long as these absences remain, the likelihood of the intended positive impacts, foreseen by the Project becoming a reality, remains very low.	Highly Unsatisfactory
vi. <i>Communication and public awareness</i>	Several informative meetings were held with different groups, though not systematically addressing the wider public audience; most <i>public awareness</i> activities are planned through the use of the Project website which unfortunately, though available on internet since December 2020, has not been advertised or promoted to the wide public yet.	Moderately Unsatisfactory
Overall Project Rating		Moderately Unsatisfactory

(*) As for ToRs, the overall rating for Sustainability is the lowest rating among the three sub-categories

B. Answers to the Key Strategic Questions

179. The MTR-ToRs require, in addition to the evaluation criteria analyzed in the *Review Finding* Section, to address the following strategic questions, which are of interest to UN Environment Programme and to which the Project is believed to be able to make a substantive contribution.

a) *How has the Project been implemented from an institutional point of view?*

180. The NEA has been unsuccessful in ensuring inter-institutional political support both at Project level (absence of a *Steering Committee*) and at a wider political level (non-existence of the *National Biosafety Commission*); as long as these absences remain, the likelihood of the intended positive impacts, foreseen by the Project, remains very low.

b) *How have different aspects of the Project structure been approached? Is the Project well structured?*

181. In terms of design, all Project *Expected Outcomes* and *Outputs* contained in the workplan are fully in line with the Project objective. However, for some of the identified Outcomes (1.1.4, 1.1.5, and 2.1.1) there are no specifically conclusive actions enlisted and for one specific Outcome (3.2) no finalization is planned.

c) *To what extent have Project activities / objectives been achieved?*

182. Mostly due to the unfavourable nature of the external context, but also to MINEC inter-institutional isolation in the NBF implementation, *none of the Outputs and Outcomes* defined in the workplan has been fully achieved so far and only half of the workplan activities (mainly consultancies) have been completed.

d) *What are the main lessons learned so far?*

183. See Section V-C on *Lessons learned* below.

e) *What are the main recommendations to address current challenges and avoid Project limitations going forward?*

184. See Section V-D on *Recommendations* below.

C. Lessons learned

Lesson Learned #1:	A dedicated and expert team is the best asset to cope with an unfavourable external context.
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Context/comment: The example of dedication to the Project offered by this Project Team is extremely significant. The problems caused by the hyper-inflation or the extremely long delay in procurement, mostly due to international economic sanctions [Ref. Section IV-C on *Nature of External Context*], would have probably crashed, in many other situations, the determination of many actors in continuing the Project. The results obtained so far in completing most of the consultancies and almost finalizing the equipment of the Reference Laboratory, throughout adverse circumstances, are the products of a tenacious perseverance and dedication of the NEA team which should be praised and taken as example in similar situations.

Lesson Learned #2:

Workplan foreseen Activities should be clearly leading to the effective achievement of the Expected Outputs and Outcomes.

Context/comment: If we take, as an example, the Expected Outcome 3.2 (*Public participation in decision-making processes on LMOs is promoted and systematized*) and its related Outputs, both activities foreseen by the workplan (3.2.1.a *Consultancy for the development of a Q&A system and portal for public opinion on the NCA's website*, and 3.2.2.a *6 Discussion forums with the private sector to exchange views and queries*) do not provide real progresses toward the effective accomplishment of the Expected Outcome and, in particular, do not specifically lead toward the implementation of this important Component of the NBF, which is mandatorily required by Art. 23 of the CPB. Under the *Quality of Project Design* section, additional though minor inconsistencies between activities and related outputs are also highlighted in relation to Outputs 1.1.4, and 1.1.5 [Ref. Section IV-B, on *Quality of Project Design*].

Lesson Learned #3:

Projects dealing with Governance must rely on an effective and dedicated Steering Committee as well as on wide and solid inter-institutional support.

Context/comment: This Project exemplifies an important paradox: a very well managed chain of actions, aiming at implementing a framework at national level, but executed in total isolation from the other institutional stakeholders. The result is an obvious *impasse* where: a) the political support, needed to approve the NBF has not been built and b) in the expected process of building this support, many of the accomplished results already achieved may be challenged and overturned by the necessary new actors of the process [Ref. Sub-section D-iii on *Likelihood of Impact*].

Lesson Learned #4:

Monitoring Plans, to be efficient, should be able to effectively trigger alarms and eventually question the IA about the opportunity of temporarily suspending Project implementation.

Context/comment: While clearly taking into consideration the unfavourable nature of the external context in which this specific Project is operating, what appears very clear from the Project document is: a) the need to engage the stakeholders in Project implementation; b) the list of institutional stakeholders, including the CNB; and c) the Venezuela Government commitment to hold *Project Steering Committee* meetings, minimum twice a year [Ref. for (a) and (b) see *Project document, Part 2, Section B1*; for (c) see *Project document, Annex G: Monitoring and Evaluation budget or workplan*].

It is observed that the absence of a *Steering Committee* meeting, in three and half years of Project activity, might have prompted the IA (after having requested the NEA to effectively correct this problem, and in the absence of corrective measures taken), in considering a provisional suspension of the Project implementation.

D. Recommendations

Recommendation #1:	<p>Project implementation should be placed <i>on hold</i> (i.e. suspension of any further cash advance and/or disbursements), pending: a) an effective meeting of the <i>Steering Committee</i>, and b) explicit commitments, by all designated <i>National Competent Authorities</i> of the <i>National Biosafety Commission</i>, to appoint their members and enable the activities of the Commission.</p>
<i>Context/comment:</i>	<p>In consideration that the overall Project Objective, as well as most of the <i>Expected Outcomes</i> of Components 1, 2 and 3 of the workplan, require agreement at Governmental level in order to be accomplished, it is observed that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the completion of the Project without inter-institutional support is considered to be a too high risk for the sustainability of the Project objective; 2) according to national legislation, the <i>National Biosafety Commission</i> is the legal entity in charge of advising the National Executive on activities related to genetically modified organisms and products thereof.
<i>Priority Level:</i>	<i>Critical recommendation</i>
<i>Responsibility:</i>	IA, FA, NEA.
<i>Proposed implementation time-frame:</i>	Urgent.
<i>Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions</i>	<i>Sub-section D-iii on Likelihood of Impact and Section H on Sustainability.</i>
Recommendation #2:	<p>A new Project workplan and time extension should be discussed within the <i>Steering Committee</i>, taking into consideration: a) the Project unfavourable operating context, b) the remaining available resources, and c) the specific needs of the <i>Steering Committee's partner institutions</i> in the implementation of the NBF.</p>
<i>Context/comment:</i>	<p>In consideration of the imminent deadline, Project timeline, workplan, priorities and budget allocation need to be re-defined.</p> <p>The results of this discussion depend, and may have a direct impact, on the <i>Steering Committee's</i> partner institutions, their commitment and their policies/strategies implementation.</p>
<i>Priority Level:</i>	<i>Critical recommendation</i>

<i>Responsibility:</i>	IA, NEA, <i>Steering Committee</i> .
<i>Proposed implementation time-frame:</i>	Urgent.
<i>Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions</i>	<i>Sub-section D-iii on Likelihood of Impact.</i>
Recommendation #3:	Measures to mitigate the financial sustainability risks of Expected Outcomes (specifically for the support of both laboratory activities and personnel training, after the Project conclusion) should be discussed within the <i>Steering Committee</i> and possibly implemented within the new workplan.
<i>Context/comment:</i>	Lack of future financial support of both laboratory activities and personnel training is indicated as a serious threat and posing a significant risk to the sustainability of future Project outcomes.
<i>Priority Level:</i>	<i>Important recommendation</i>
<i>Responsibility:</i>	NEA, <i>Steering Committee</i> , IA.
<i>Proposed implementation time-frame:</i>	Depending on time extension, but no later than the second meeting of the <i>Steering Committee</i> .
<i>Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions</i>	<i>Sub-section H-ii on Financial sustainability.</i>

Recommendation #4:	Alignment with the <i>Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety</i> should be verified in: a) the <i>Expected Outputs</i> and related activities of Component 3 (with reference to Art. 23 of the CPB); and b) in considering the <i>Guide for the evaluation and risk analysis of LMOs</i>, produced under <i>Output 1.1.3</i> (with reference to Art. 15 of the CPB).
<i>Context/comment:</i>	<p>1) While Component 3 (<i>Development of appropriate capacities for public participation in decision-making</i>) appears to be in line with the CPB requirements, it is observed that the accomplishment of all related <i>Expected Outputs</i> and foreseen activities would not necessarily lead to implement a NBF in compliance with Art. 23 of the CPB.</p> <p>2) The <i>Guide for the evaluation and risk analysis of LMOs</i> (produced under <i>Output 1.1.3</i>) deals with the risk assessment of LMOs only from an economic point of view and it is, therefore, not in line with Art. 15 of the CPB requiring risk assessments to be <i>carried out in a scientifically sound manner, in accordance with Annex III and taking into account recognized risk assessment techniques</i>.</p>
<i>Priority Level:</i>	<i>Opportunity for improvement</i>
<i>Responsibility:</i>	NEA, IA.
<i>Proposed implementation time-frame:</i>	Before the approval of a new workplan.
<i>Cross-reference(s) to rationale and supporting discussions</i>	<i>Section B on Quality of Project Design and Para. 101</i>

ANNEX I. RESPONSE TO STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

A draft report of this Mid-Term Review was submitted to the Project Team, on April 27th (the day after a plenary video-conference hold on the first possible date due to COVID-19 impact), for their comments and suggestions to be integrated in the final report. Unfortunately, since then and till the ending date of the MTR consultancy on May 12th, no further contribution reached the reviewer and this final version of the report reflects almost integrally the draft report presented at the video-conference and circulated thereafter.

ANNEX II. PEOPLE CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW

Table 1. People consulted during the Review

Organization	Name	Position	Gender
Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism (MINEC)	Miguel Serrano	Head of the Project National Executing Agency (NEA); Director of the Office of Integration and International Affairs; GEF Operational Focal Point	M
Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism (MINEC)	Yorlandis Chiquito	Deputy of the Project National Executing Agency (NEA); Director of Office of Integration	F
Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism (MINEC)	Carliz Diaz	National Project Coordinator (NPC); General Directorate of Biological Diversity; Cartagena and Nagoya Protocols and BCH National Focal Point	F
UN Environment Programme, Panama	Thais Narciso	Project Task Manager	F
UN Environment Programme, Panama	Gloritzel Frangakis	Project Assistant	F
UNDP, Venezuela	Maria Abogado	Project Fund Manager	F
Biotech Research Centre Agricola Ciba	Yreny De Faria	Agronomist	F
Central University of Venezuela (UCV) - Faculty of Agronomy	Angela Bedoya	Consultant	F
Central University of Venezuela (UCV) - Faculty of Agronomy	Catalina Ramis	Consultant	F
Central University of Venezuela (UCV) - Faculty of Agronomy	Luis Angulo	Consultant	M
Central University of Venezuela (UCV) - Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences	Luis Francisco Plaza	Consultant	M
Central University of Venezuela (UCV) - Faculty of Engineering	Luis Alexander Diaz	Author of the book: Aspectos políticos y legales de la Seguridad de la Biotecnología Moderna en Venezuela (Political and legal aspects of Modern Biosafety in Venezuela)	M
Central University of Venezuela (UCV) - Institute of Agricultural Economics and Social Sciences	Fernando Marrero	Consultant	M
Freelance	Antonio Salgado	Consultant	M
Freelance	Kerwin Castillo	Consultant	M
Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism (MINEC)	Julio Salazar	Professional I General Directorate of Biological Diversity	M

Organization	Name	Position	Gender
Ministry of Popular Power for Health (MPPS) and UCV	María Eugenia Cavazza	Consultant	F
Ministry of Popular Power for Health (MPPS) and UCV - Oncology Institute	Maria Correnti	Consultant	F
Ministry of Popular Power for Science and Technology (MINCYT):	Marco Castillo	Director of Integration and International Affairs	M
Rosemblak Scientific	Gabriel Blanco	General Manager	M

In consideration of the heavy relevance that the absence of the Project Steering Committee and the non-existence of the National Biosafety Commission (CNB) have played in this Mid-term Review, invitations for interviews were addressed to several representatives of the National Competent Authorities which are identified by the decree establishing the National Biosafety Commission. Out of the ten persons suggested by the NEA for this purpose, only two replied and, in both cases, did not follow up with the consultant's request for an interview

Table 2. Representatives of CNB's National Competent Authorities, also invited for interviews

Organization	Name	Position
Ministerio del Poder Popular para Ciencia y Tecnología (MINCYT, Ministry of Popular Power for Science and Technology)	Dario Torrealba	Fundación de Estudios Avanzados IDEA
Ministerio del Poder Popular para Ciencia y Tecnología (MINCYT, Ministry of Popular Power for Science and Technology)	Marco Castillo	Director de Integración y Asuntos Internacionales
Ministerio del Poder Popular para Agricultura y Tierras (MPPAT, Ministry of Popular Power for Agriculture and Lands)	Danny Mota (*)	Directora de la Oficina de Integración y Asuntos Internacionales
Ministerio del Poder Popular para Agricultura y Tierras (MPPAT, Ministry of Popular Power for Agriculture and Lands)	Erikmar Balza	Coordinadora de promoción e intercambio Comercial Agrario
Ministerio del Poder Popular para Agricultura y Tierras (MPPAT, Ministry of Popular Power for Agriculture and Lands)	Yamila Rodríguez	Instituto Nacional de Salud Agrícola Integral
Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Alimentación (MPPA, Ministry of Popular Power for Food)	Daniel Garrido	Director General de Integración y Asuntos Internacionales
Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Alimentación (MPPA, Ministry of Popular Power for Food)	Erika Vidal	Ingeniera de Alimentos, del Viceministerio de Producción, Comercialización y Calidad
Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Salud (MPPS, Ministry of Popular Power for Health)	José Rivas	Director ejecutivo IAE

Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Salud (MPPS, Ministry of Popular Power for Health)	Julio Colmenares	Director de Cooperación Oficina de Asuntos Internacionales
Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Salud (MPPS, Ministry of Popular Power for Health)	Maiqui Flores	Jefe Sala Situacional Secretaria de Salud Aragua

() The email address used for this contact returned back with error and no alternative addresses were provided, when requested, neither by the NEA nor by a different contact in the same ministry*

ANNEX III. KEY DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Project planning and reporting documents (2017-2021)

- UNDP - Project Combined Delivery Reports (4 documents)
- UNDP - Project Consultants Contracts (19 documents)
- UNDP - Financial Report 2017-2019
- UNEP - Consultants Contracts (19 documents)
- UNEP - Project Periodic Expenditures Reports (43 documents)
- UNEP - Project Budget Document and Budget Revisions (19 documents)
- UNEP - Project Initial Documents (21 documents)
- UNEP - Project Inventory documents (5 documents)
- UNEP - Project Missions and Meetings Reports (9 documents)
- UNEP - Project PIRs (5 documents)
- UNEP - Project ToRs (27 documents)
- UNEP - Project Workplan and Workplan Revisions (8 documents)

Project outputs – Consultancies (2018-2020)

- *Antonio Salgado, 2020* - Partial documentation on the MINEC-OGM website (16 documents)
- *Catalina Ramis, 2018-2020* - Consultancy reports (6 documents)
- *Fernando Marrero, 2019* - Consultancy reports (4 documents)
- *Luis Plata, 2019* - Consultancy product: Desarrollar las guías con los protocolos para: el tránsito, ensayo de campo confinado, medidas de emergencia y evaluación de riesgos de OGM de acuerdo con la legislación nacional vigente y las competencias de las autoridades nacionales competentes (Developing guides with protocols for: transit, confined field testing, emergency measures and GMO risk assessment in accordance with current national legislation and the competencies of the Competent National Authorities)
- *Luis Plata, 2019* - Consultancy product: Guía para la evaluación y análisis de riesgo de OGMs, teniendo como referencia la legislación nacional venezolana Estudio de caso de liberación hipotética de un OGM a campo (Guide for the evaluation and risk analysis of GMOs, having as reference the Venezuelan national legislation Case study of a hypothetical release of a GMO to the field)
- *María Correnti, 2019-2020* - Consultancy reports (3 documents)
- *María Eugenia Cavazza, 2018-2019* - Consultancy reports (6 documents)

Project outputs – Meetings and reports (2017 -2020)

- *Cuerpo de Bomberos Venezuela, 2017* - Resultados comité consultivo informe bomberos
- *MINEC, 2017* - Minuta de la reunión para la evaluación del primer plan de procura para el equipamiento de la oficina administrativa del Proyecto PNUD
- *MINEC, 2017* - Minuta examen de los avances del proyecto al 19/12/2017
- *MINEC, 2017* - Reporte del taller de inicio
- *MINEC, 2017* - Reporte Taller Panama: Inicio del Proyecto
- *MINEC, 2017* - Resultados de la Reunión del Comité Consultivo Externo, con el fin de realizar la evaluación de las instalaciones del Laboratorio para detección de OGM del MINEA, ubicado en Maracay, estado Aragua
- *MINEC, 2018* - Informe mision Mexico CIBIOGEM (Reunión en la Secretaría Ejecutiva de la CIBIOGEM y Visita al Centro Nacional de Referencia en Detección de Organismos Genéticamente Modificados (CNRDOGEM))
- *MINEC, 2018* - Reporte de la reunión de instalación de la Unidad de Gestión del Proyecto
- *MINEC, 2018* - Reporte del taller sensibilización pública sobre los OGM, Hotel Pipo Internacional Maracay
- *MINEC, 2020* - Minuta Actividad Taller Práctico de “Bioseguridad y Detección de Organismos Genéticamente Modificados (OMG)” y Visita a las instalaciones del Laboratorio de Referencia para la Detección de OMG del MINEC
- *MINEC, 2020* - Minuta del Primer taller internacional en línea, Implementación del Marco Nacional de Bioseguridad en Venezuela, de acuerdo con el Protocolo de Cartagena sobre Seguridad de la Biotecnología (Proyecto GEF ID: 5290) Avances del proyecto (Componente 4)
- *MINEC, 2021* - Minuta sobre la reunión con los Directores Generales de Integración y Asuntos Internacionales de las Autoridades Nacionales Competentes
- *MINEC, 2021* - PowerPoint Presentation of the NBF Project
- *MPPS, 2018* - Minuta de Reunión: Experiencia de Espromed BIO CA, en Bioseguridad, en el marco del proyecto de Implementación del Plan Nacional de Bioseguridad
- *MPPS, 2018* - Minuta de Reunión: Presentación del proyecto: “Implementación del Marco Nacional de Bioseguridad en la República Bolivariana de Venezuela, en concordancia con el Protocolo de Cartagena sobre Seguridad de la Biotecnología Moderna (Proyecto GEF ID: 5290)”
- *Rosemblank Scientific, 2020* - Informe Visita Laboratorio

Reference documents

- *Diaz Martinez, Luis Alexander, 2020* - Bioseguridad en Venezuela: Visión legal y política
- *Gazeta Oficial de la Republica Bolivariana de Venezuela, 2003* - No 37733 (CNB establishment)
- *Gazeta Oficial de la Republica Bolivariana de Venezuela, 2006* - No 38392 (CNB discipline)
- *GEF, 2018* - GEF7 Biodiversity Strategy

- *GEF, 2018* - Overview: GEF-7 - Global Context and Strategic Priorities
- *GEF, 2019* - The GEF Evaluation Policy
- *Istituto Nacional de Estadística, República Bolivariana de Venezuela, 2011* - Resultados Población Indígena, XIV Censo De Población y Vivienda 2011
- *MINEC (MARN), 2005* - Marco Nacional de Seguridad de la Biotecnología en la República Bolivariana de Venezuela
- *UNDP, 2014* - Guidance for Conducting Midterm Reviews of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects
- *UNEP, 2005* - Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building
- *UNEP, 2016* - Medium Term Strategy 2018-2021
- *UNEP, 2016* - The State of Biodiversity in Latin America and the Caribbean - A Mid-Term Review of Progress Towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets
- *UNEP, 2019* - GEF MTR Tools Package (20 documents)
- *UNEP, 2020* - Strategy for South-South and Triangular Cooperation

Websites

- *Biodiversity A-Z (UNEP-WCMC)* - Megadiverse Countries / Venezuela (<https://www.biodiversitya-z.org/content/venezuela-bolivarian-republic-of>)
- *MINEC* - NBF Project website (<https://ovm.3dimensional.agency/>)
- *MINEC* - Sistema Venezolano de Información sobre Diversidad Biológica (SVIDB) (<http://200.11.192.207/plataforma>)
- *Rhett A. Butler (Mogabay), 2019* - Countries with the highest biodiversity (https://rainforests.mogabay.com/03highest_biodiversity.htm)
- *UNEP* - Anubis (restricted access)

ANNEX IV. CURRENT PROJECT WORKPLAN

Table 1: Current Project Workplan (approved on 11/06/2020)

Expected Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Activities
<i>Component 1 - Completion and operation of biosafety legal framework.</i>		
1.1 Regulatory biosafety framework is completed, adopted and integrated within the National Strategy for the Conservation of Biodiversity 2010-2020 and its National Action Plan	1.1.1 National Policy Document on Biosafety	1 Main Technical Assistant (ATP) of the Project [To define, JUL20-JUN 21]
		a. Consultancy for the revision of existing NBF [Completed, FEB19-FEB/MAR20]
		b. Consultancy for drafting a national BS policy [Completed, FEB18-FEB/MAR20]
		c. (4) Consultation meetings, (2) high level political meeting for lobbying [JAN21-MAY21]
		d. Publication of the national BS policy [JUN21-SEP21]
	1.1.2 National biosafety legislation in connection with existing laws	a. Consultancy for drafting BS regulation [Completed, JUN20-NOV20]
		b. (4) Consultation meetings, (2) high level political meeting for lobbying [JUN18-AUG21].
		c. Publication of the BS act [JUN21-SEP21]
	1.1.3 Sectorial rules/resolutions and guidelines for the management of GMOs	a. Consultancy to develop sectorial rules and regulations [JUN21-SEP21]
		b. Consultancy to develop technical guidelines and protocols (transit, confined field trial, emergency measures, risk assessment) [Completed, MAR19-NOV/DIC19] <i>[Reviewer note: Biological Risk assessment is missing]</i>
		c. Meetings (3) for the process of drafting guidelines as per point (e) [APR19-DIC21]
	1.1.4 Guidelines and procedural manuals for LMO users, including importers / exporters, producers, processing industry and researchers	a. Consultancy to develop guidelines and procedures as per Output 1.1.4 [Completed, APR19-SEP19]
	1.1.5 Administrative and technical forms for LMO applications	a. Consultancy for development of administrative and technical forms for LMOs applications [Completed, JUN20-NOV20]
		b. Meetings to socialize forms to NCA [OCT18-SEP21]

Expected Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Activities
<i>Component 2 - Development of appropriate institutional and human capacity for decision-making and regulatory compliance in biosafety</i>		
2.1 The institutional and administrative framework is reinforced to provide effective responses to LMO applications and communicate decisions in line with the CPB	2.1.1 Centralized administrative system to handle applications with LMOs including a "single-centralized window"	<p>2. Consultancy for Public Perception of Modern Biotechnology in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela [To define, JUL20-NOV20]; <i>[Reviewer note: no follow up available]</i></p> <p>a. Consultancy for the development of an administrative system [Completed, JUN20-NOV20]</p> <p>b. Subcontract for the development of a digital system to process GMO applications [Completed, JAN19-NOV/DIC20]</p>
	2.1.2 Technical Secretariat of the National Biosafety Committee created with specialized technical personnel	a. Meetings (4) to discuss the confirmation of the Biosafety committee and to validate proposal in national policy and law (coupled with active of comp 1) [JUN20-SEP21]
2.2 There is greater human capacity, clarity, scientific and technological bases to make decisions regarding LMOs	2.2.1 Evaluation processes of environmental and health risks validated by the national authorities responsible for different uses of LMOs	a. (4) training workshops on biosafety risk assessment and management (cost: subcontract 60 + local arrangements 20) [JUN20-SEP21]
		b. (6) fellowships for Project Management Unit and NCA's personnel to be trained abroad [To define, APR19-SEP21]
		c. Mock exercise to validate the operation of the biosafety system (cost: subcontract 20 + local arrangements 5) [To define, APR20-JUL21]
2.3 There is greater human capacity, clarity, scientific and technology to control / monitor activities with LMOs in the country	2.3.1 Specialized personnel trained to perform the tasks of monitoring and detection of LMOs at sea ports, airports and customs checkpoints	a. (4) Training workshops on biosafety monitoring and detection techniques for custom officers and personnel at control points.(cost: subcontract 60 + local arrangements 20) [JUN19-AUG21]
	2.3.2 Mechanisms established for risk control and management, including technology and methods for LMO	<p>a. Consultancy to develop monitoring and detection mechanisms including: methods for LMO traceability/ detection, and contingency protocols for emergency response in case of accidents involving LMOs <i>[Reviewer note: no follow up available]</i></p> <p>b. Meetings to discuss the product of consultancy and validation of the mechanisms [JUL19-SEP21]</p>

Expected Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Activities
	traceability/ detection, and contingency protocols for emergency response in case of accidents involving LMOs	c. Purchase of equipment related to monitoring in control points [JUL18-SEP21]
<i>Component 3 - Development of appropriate capacities for public participation in decision-making</i>		
3.1 Increase the level of public understanding of biosafety through operations based on participatory diagnosis	3.1.1. Surveys and trend analysis on the level of information, awareness and changes in public opinion about biotechnology, biosafety and LMOs	3. Consulting to develop the e-learning platform for Project training (Project GEF ID: 5290) [To define, JUL20-NOV20]; <i>[Reviewer note: no follow up available]</i>
		a. Consultancy to develop survey forms, application of surveys and analysis of collected data. (2 phases before and sensitization activities) [JAN19/DIC 21]
		b. Publication of results (print and online) [NOV17-SEP21]
		c. Meetings (2) to discuss survey results [JAN18-SEP21]
	3.1.2. National Public Awareness and Information on LMOs and biotechnology including dissemination through websites	a. Consultancy collection of biosafety related data for public awareness materials, and proposal on how to use/make available this information [To define, JAN19-SEP21]
		b. Update of BCH with relevant biosafety information and Project products on regular basis [NOV17-AUG/SEP21]
		c. Consultancy for the development of the Project website [Completed, MAR19-NOV/DIC 20]
		d. Subcontract to a firm for publication and printing of informative materials (brochures, banners, etc.) [NOV17-MAR/JUN21]
3.2 Public participation in decision-making processes on LMOs is promoted and systematized	3.2.1 Participation structures and mechanisms as part of authorization process of LMOs, including a Claims Desk and Question and Answers system.	a. Consultancy for the development of a Q&A system and portal for public opinion on the NCA's website (. (could be link with the development of the digital system on Component 2); <i>[Reviewer note: no follow up available]</i>
		b. Workshop for validation of the Project Q & A system, in order to improve public participation in decision-making over GMOs [Completed, JUN18]
	3.2.2 Discussion forums with the private sector to exchange views and queries	a. (6) discussion forums, seminar or online meeting according to the needs of the Project, in the framework of the pandemic [JUL20-NOV/DIC 20]; <i>[Reviewer note: no follow up available]</i>

Expected Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Activities
3.3 A coordinated governmental system for public access to information on biosafety is supported in accordance with Article 20 of the CPB	3.3.1 Up to date sectorial information regarding GMOs presented and/or authorized by the country	a. Coupled with act. 3.1.2 b (update of the BCH) [JAN20-JUL21]
<i>Component 4 - Strengthening of infrastructure for the detection and management of LMOs</i>		
4.1 Equip and operate the Reference Laboratory for Detection of LMOs of the Ministry of Popular Power for the Environment, the lead agency for Biosafety in Venezuela, responsible for supervision and control of LMOs in the country	4.1.1. An operational laboratory that has the necessary infrastructure to carry out analysis and detection of LMOs, which allows Venezuela to meet its obligations under the CPB	4. Consulting for the use of digital tools platform for the promotion, training and exchange of knowledge of the GEF Project ID: 5290, given the pandemic of the coronavirus COVID-19 [To define, JUL20-NOV/DIC 20]; [Reviewer note: no follow up available]
		a. Consultancy for assessing the real need in terms of equipment at the moment of Project implementation [Completed, JUN20-NOV20]
		b. Purchase of laboratory equipment, supplies, other materials for improvement of infrastructure (electric and plumbing connections, lab tables, etc) [JAN18-SEP21]
		c. Installation of equipment and tests [APR18-SEP21]
		d. consultancy Validation of detection protocols developed under Component 2 [Completed, MAR19]
		e. development of MoU between the selected lab and the NCAs for operation [APR18-SEP21]
<i>Component 5 - M&E and Project operations</i>		
5.1 Project executed in a timely manner, achieving outcomes and producing high quality outputs	5.1.1 Project inception and closure workshops	a. Coordination and hosting of the workshops(10) [NOV17- AUG21]
	5.1.3 SC meetings	b. Coordination and hosting of the meetings [NOV17- AUG21]
	5.1.4 MT and TE	c. Coordination and participation in the evaluations [SEP17- AUG21]

ANNEX V. SURVEY DESCRIPTION AND RESULTS ANALYSIS

1. An online survey, aimed to all people who had come into contact with the Project, was launched, via the Google's Survey platform, at the beginning of March 2021 and was kept active from 5 to 31 March 2021. The objective of the survey was gathering feedback from a wider audience than the group of persons interviewed.
2. A list of 238 potential participants to the survey was provided, mainly by the NEA, by extracting their contact details from several lists of attendees to various informative meetings, organized by MINEC and aimed at creating awareness on the Project. Among others, the final list of invited persons included all consultants or professionals who had carried-on activities related to the Project as well as additional contacts indicated by the interviewees as persons informed on the Project. The first mail-out received about 30 error messages, due to incorrect e-mail addresses, and some of these were eventually corrected with the help of the NEA. The number of e-mail invitations, which resulted reaching their targets after several verifications, was 210 (88% of the potential target); and a total of 71 valid responses (34% of the potential target), were eventually obtained through the survey.
3. The access to the survey was set as semi-anonymous, meaning that the participants' email addresses were requested at the beginning of the process to avoid data entries by unsolicited people; however the identity of the participants was not taken into consideration in the analysis of the responses.
4. The survey was structured in six sections and the respondents were grouped according to their indicated degree of knowledge of the Project. Each section of the survey contained one or more closed-ended questions, mainly requiring the respondents to rate, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), their evaluation of some specific achievement, plus one free-text space to provide comments.
5. In the opening question (Q1.1) the participants were asked about their group (or groups) of origin. The largest group of participants indicated as their group of origin the *Institutions of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela* (35% of the participants); other significantly represented groups were: *Representatives of the University sector* (15.5%), *Representatives of the Scientific Community* (12.7%) and the *National Executing Agency* (12.7%).
6. A second question (Q1.2) asked participants to rate how much they knew about the Project. The average rating, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), was 3.2. In particular less than 10% of the participants rated their knowledge of the Project *between 0 and 1*; almost 80% rated their knowledge *between 2 and 4* and slightly more than 11% rated their knowledge as 5.
7. From the 33 optional comments (approx. 46% of the total participants) received in the free-text space at the end of this initial section (question Q1.3) most of the respondents qualified as belonging to two main categories: 1) representatives of the Government institutions and/or academic/scientific community, interested and partially involved in the Project activities, and 2) individuals who had been in touch with the Project through one or more informative meetings, but who declared not knowing much about it.
8. Question Q3.1 asked those participants who stated having some knowledge of the Project, if they had any direct input in its implementation: 37 respondents answered positively (52.1% of the total participants).
9. Based on the answers to the above questions, respondents were classified into four groups and directed accordingly, to different sections of the survey.

Group 1

10. Respondents who stated *they did not know the Project* were identified as *Group 1* and directed to the last two sections of the survey, common to all participants. In these sections, all participants were asked about their level of satisfaction with the information received regarding the Project, possible suggestions to improve the dissemination of this information among the public, and were offered, optionally, the possibility to provide their contact details.

11. Participants in Group 1 were required to answer a minimum of 7 mandatory questions, plus optional comments and contact details. Only 1 respondent (1.4% of the participants), belonging to a *Non-Governmental Organization*, was eventually included in this group and the quality of the information received on the Project was rated, by this respondent, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), as 0.

Group 2

12. Respondents who stated they *knew little about the Project* were identified as *Group 2*. This group included 6 respondents (8.4% of the participants), from either *Non-Governmental Organizations* or *Governmental Institutions*.

13. Respondents in Group 2 were directed to section S4.2 of the survey and asked if there was a specific component that they had followed more closely. To those who indicated a component, it was asked their opinion on its achievements so far, and possible suggestions to improve the results. Respondents in this group were asked to answer an average of 9 mandatory questions, plus optional comments and contact details.

14. The majority of the respondents in Group 2 indicated having been following more in details Components 2 (*Development of appropriate institutional and human capacity for decision-making and regulatory compliance in biosafety*) and the quality of the information received on the Project was rated by this group, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), as 1.2.

Group 3

15. Respondents who stated they *knew the Project but did not take an active role in its implementation* were identified as *Group 3*. This group included 27 respondents (38.0% of the participants), mainly from *Governmental Institutions*.

16. In looking in more details to the groups of origin of Group 3 (i.e. those respondents declaring knowing about the Project without having taken part to its implementation), it is worth noting that out of 27 respondents in this group, 20 respondents (74% of this group) declared to be part of the NEA and/or other Ministries and/or Governmental Institutions and almost all remaining respondents declared to be part of the academic/scientific community.

17. Respondents in Group 3 were as asked how much of the Project Objective had, in their opinion, already been achieved, and their average rating, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), was 2.7. Similarly to Group 2, participants in Group 3 were then directed to section S4.2 of the survey and asked if there was a specific component that they had followed more closely. To those who indicated a component, it was asked their opinion on its achievements so far and possible suggestions to improve the results. Respondents in this group were asked to answer an average of 11 questions, plus optional comments and contact details.

18. Respondents in Group 3 indicated having been following more in details Components 2 (*Development of appropriate institutional and human capacity for decision-making and regulatory compliance in biosafety*) and 4 (*Strengthening of infrastructure for the detection and management of LMOs*) of the Project. Their average rating of all Project components, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), was *between 2.9 for Component 4 and 3.1 for Component 2*.

19. The quality of the information received on the Project by this group was rated, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), as 3.

Group 4

20. Respondents who stated they *knew the Project and took an active role in its implementation* were identified as *Group 4*. This group included 37 respondents (52.1% of the participants), mainly from *Governmental Institutions, Consultants contracted by the Project, and Representatives of the Scientific Community or of the University sector*.

21. Respondents in Group 4 were directed to section S4.1 of the survey and asked to evaluate their contribution, the interaction they had with the other actors of the Project, indicate to which component they gave the greatest contribution, evaluate the results and products obtained in that specific component and finally suggest possible improvements. Respondents in this group were asked to answer an average of 17 questions, plus optional comments and contact details.

22. The average rating of Group 4, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), on how much of the Project Objective had already been achieved was 3.1.

23. This Group indicated a very positive interaction with the NEA (average rating: 3.9) and with the other groups involved in Project implementation (average rating: 3.5); and an extremely high appreciation for the effort of the NEA in coordinating the Project (average rating: 4.3).

24. The main Project Components to which this Group stated having provided a most direct input was Component 4 (*Strengthening of infrastructure for the detection and management of LMOs.*) indicated by 14 respondents (37% of the total participants to the survey), followed by Component 3 (*Development of appropriate capacities for public participation in decision-making*) indicated by 9 respondents (24.3%).

25. The respondents in this group were also asked to rate how much had been accomplished so far, in their opinion, of the Outcomes and Outputs of the Component they indicated having provided a most direct input. The highest average ratings were indicated for Outcome 2.2 (*There is greater human capacity, clarity, scientific and technological bases to make decisions regarding GMOs;* with an average rating of 3.8), Outcome 3.3 (*A coordinated governmental system for public access to information on biosafety is supported in accordance with Article 20 of the CPB;* with an average rating of 3.3), Outcome 2.1 (*The institutional and administrative framework is reinforced to provide effective responses to GMO applications and communicate decisions in line with the CPB;* with an average rating of 3.3) and Output 1.1.1 (*National Policy Document on Biosafety.* with an average rating of 3.5).

26. The quality of the information received on the Project by this group was rated, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), as 3.8.

All Participants

27. The average rating from all respondents, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), on how much of the Project Objective had already been achieved was 3.3 and the one about the quality of the information received was 3.2. All survey results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Survey text, flow and results

Reference	Original Text in Spanish	English Translation	Results
[Title]	<p>ENCUESTA: Implementación del Marco Nacional de Bioseguridad en Venezuela de acuerdo con el Protocolo de Cartagena sobre Seguridad de la Biotecnología</p> <p>Esta encuesta forma parte de la evaluación de medio-termino del Proyecto UN Environment Programme - GEF - MINEC</p>	<p><i>SURVEY: Implementation of the National Biosafety Framework in Venezuela in accordance to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety</i></p> <p><i>This survey is part of the mid-term review of the UN Environment Programme / GEF / MINEC Project</i></p>	
S1	¿Cuánto sabe del proyecto?	<i>How much do you know about the Project?</i>	Respondents in this section: 71 (100%)
Q1.1	¿A cuál de los siguientes grupos pertenece?	<i>To which of the following group you belong?</i>	No. of respondents and percentage vs. the total number of participants
[Note]	<i>[Under this question, participants were allowed to select more than one category]</i>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agencia ejecutora del proyecto (Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ecosocialismo - MINEC)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>National Executing Agency (Office of Integration and International Affairs of the Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism, MINEC)</i> 	9 (12.7%)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ministerios del Gobierno de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ministries of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela</i> 	7 (9.9%)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Instituciones del Gobierno de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Institutions of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela</i> 	25 (35.2%)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Organizaciones internacionales</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>International Organizations</i> 	2 (2.8%)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Consultores contratados por el proyecto</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Consultants contracted by the Project</i> 	8 (11.3%)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Científicos involucrados en la implementación del laboratorio</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Scientists involved in the implementation of the laboratory</i> 	2 (2.8%)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Representantes de la comunidad científica</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Representatives of the Scientific Community</i> 	9 (12.7%)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Representantes del sector universitario</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Representatives of the University sector</i> 	11 (15.5%)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Organizaciones no gubernamentales</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Non-Governmental Organizations</i> 	5 (7%)

Reference	Original Text in Spanish	English Translation	Results
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grupos de partes interesadas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups of interested parties 	4 (5.6%)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personas que han brindado apoyo o ayuda en la definición del proyecto 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persons who have supported or provided help in the Project definition 	6 (8.5%)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Otros (especificar) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other (specify) 	1 (1.4%)
Q1.2	En general, en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿cómo diría que conoce el proyecto?	<i>In general, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how much you would say you know about the Project?</i>	Average rating: 3.2
Q1.3	(opcional) - Aquí puede agregar sus comentarios sobre las preguntas anteriores	<i>(optional) Here you may insert your comments on the previous questions</i>	This 'free text' question received 33 responses (see summary below)
[Summary]	<i>The respondents provided general comments on their level of knowledge about the Project: two main categories resulted: scientists (interested and partially involved) and persons who were informed about the Project in one or more informative meetings, and declared not knowing much about it.</i>		
[Flow]	<i>[Participants who answered "0" to question Q1.2 were directed to S5; those who answered "1" were directed to S4.2; and those who answered between 2 and 5 continued to next section]</i>		
S2	OBJETIVO DEL PROYECTO: Establecer una plataforma de medidas legislativas, reglamentarias, sociales y de infraestructura para aplicar el Protocolo de Cartagena en Venezuela, con el fin de contribuir a la conservación global y el uso sostenible de la diversidad biológica.	PROJECT OBJECTIVE: <i>Establish a platform of legislative, regulatory, social and infrastructure to implement the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety of biotechnology in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in order to contribute to the global conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.</i>	Respondents in this section: 64 (90.1%)
[Flow]	<i>[This section only received participants who answered between 2 and 5 to question Q1.2]</i>		
Q2.1	En su opinión, en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿en qué medida se ha logrado hasta ahora el Objetivo del Proyecto (ver texto arriba)?	<i>In your opinion, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how much of the Project Objective has already been achieved? (see text above)</i>	Average rating: 3.0
Q2.2	(opcional) - Aquí puede agregar sus comentarios sobre las preguntas anteriores	<i>(optional) Here you may insert your comments on the previous questions</i>	This 'free text' question received 32 responses (see summary below)
[Summary]	<i>Comments focused on many different aspects; main focus was about the legal framework with two almost opposite different perceptions: one group stated that "the legal framework is up and running" and another that the regulatory "infrastructure" is currently not working. Several respondents highlighted the lack of information about the Project subject.</i>		
[Flow]	<i>[All participants from this section continued to next section]</i>		

Reference	Original Text in Spanish	English Translation	Results
S3	Su participación	Your participation	Respondents in this section: 64 (90.1%)
[Flow]	<i>[This section received all participants from the previous section]</i>		
Q3.1	¿Ha realizado un aporte directo a la implementación del proyecto?	Have you had a direct input in the implementation of the Project?	Yes: 37 (52.1%) No: 27 (38.0%)
Q3.2	(opcional) - Aquí puede agregar sus comentarios sobre las preguntas anteriores	<i>(optional) Here you may insert your comments on the previous questions</i>	This 'free text' question received 33 responses (see summary below)
[Summary]	<i>Respondents clearly divided into two groups: consultants who were hired by the Project and people who attended informative workshops and did not actively participate to the Project.</i>		
[Flow]	<i>[Participants who answered "Yes" to question Q3.1 were directed to S4.1; those who answered "No" were directed to S4.2]</i>		
S4.1	Su contribución	Your contribution	Respondents in this section: 37 (52.1%)
[Flow]	<i>[This section only received participants who answer "Yes" to question Q3.1]</i>		
Q4.1.1	En general, en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿qué tan significativa calificaría su contribución personal a la implementación del proyecto?	<i>In general, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how positive would you rate your personal contribution to the implementation of the Project?</i>	Average rating: 3.5
Q4.1.2	En general, en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿qué tan positiva calificaría su interacción con la Agencia Ejecutora del Proyecto (Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ecosocialismo - MINEC)?	<i>In general, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how positive would you rate your interaction with the National Executing Agency (Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ecosocialismo - MINEC)?</i>	Average rating: 3.9
Q4.1.3	En general, en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿qué tan positiva calificaría su interacción con los otros grupos involucrados en la implementación del proyecto?	<i>In general, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how positive would you rate your interaction with the other groups involved in the Project implementation?</i>	Average rating: 3.5

Reference	Original Text in Spanish	English Translation	Results
Q4.1.4	En general, en una escala de 0 (mín.) a 5 (máx.), ¿qué tan positivo calificaría el esfuerzo de la Agencia Ejecutora del Proyecto (Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ecosocialismo - MINEC) en la coordinación del proyecto?	In general, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how positive would you rate the effort of the National Executing Agency (Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ecosocialismo - MINEC) in coordinating the Project?	Average rating: 4.3
Q4.1.5	¿Con cuál de los siguientes componentes del proyecto ha tenido contacto más directo?	To which of the following Project component(s) have you provided a more direct input?	No. of respondents and percentage vs. the total number of participants
	1. Actualizar y poner en operación el marco jurídico de bioseguridad.	1. Completion and operation of biosafety legal framework.	6 (12.2%)
	2. Desarrollar una adecuada capacidad institucional y de recursos humanos para la toma de decisiones y cumplimiento de las regulaciones en bioseguridad.	2. Development of appropriate institutional and human capacity for decision-making and regulatory compliance in biosafety.	8 (21.6%)
	3. Desarrollar capacidades adecuadas para la participación pública en la toma de decisiones.	3. Development of appropriate capacities for public participation in decision-making.	9 (24.3%)
	4. Fortalecimiento de la infraestructura para la detección y la gestión de riesgos de los OGM en Venezuela.	4. Strengthening of infrastructure for the detection and management of LMOs.	14 (37.8%)
Q4.1.6	(opcional) - Aquí puede agregar sus comentarios sobre las preguntas anteriores	(optional) Here you may insert your comments on the previous questions	This 'free text' question received 8 responses (see summary below)
[Summary]	General appreciation toward the Project Team was expressed by most respondents.		
[Flow]	[Participants were directed to the section corresponding to the component indicated in question Q4.1.5: S4.1.5.1, S4.1.5.2, S4.1.5.3 and S4.1.5.4]		
S4.1.5.1	Su contribución	Your contribution	Respondents in this section: 6 (8.4%)
[Flow]	[This section only received participants who answered "1" to question Q4.1.5]		
	Componente 1: Actualizar y poner en operación el marco jurídico de bioseguridad.	Component 1: Completion and operation of biosafety legal framework.	

Reference	Original Text in Spanish	English Translation	Results
Q4.1.5.1.1	Con referencia a la implementación del Componente 1 (ver texto arriba), en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿qué tan significativa calificaría su contribución personal?	<i>With reference to the Component 1 (see text above), on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how would you rate your personal contribution to its implementation?</i>	Average rating: 2.5
	Componente 1. Resultados esperados:	Component 1. Expected Outcome(s):	
Q4.1.5.1.2	Con referencia a cada uno de los Resultados esperados de la Componente 1, en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿en qué medida diría que se han logrado hasta ahora?	<i>With reference to each the Expected Outcome(s) of Component 1, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how much would you say has been accomplished so far?</i>	
	<i>Resultado 1.1: Se completa, adopta e integra el marco regulatorio de bioseguridad dentro de la Estrategia Nacional para la Conservación de la Biodiversidad 2010-2020 y su Plan de Acción Nacional en alineación con el Protocolo de Cartagena.</i>	<i>Outcome 1.1. Regulatory biosafety framework is completed, adopted and integrated within the National Strategy for the Conservation of Biodiversity 2010-2020 and its National Action Plan in alignment to the Cartagena protocol.</i>	Average rating: 2.3
	Componente 1. Productos esperados:	Component 1. Expected Output(s):	
Q4.1.5.1.3	(opcional) - Con referencia a cada uno de los Productos esperados del Componente 1, en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿en qué medida diría que se han logrado hasta ahora?	<i>(optional) - With reference to the Expected Output(s) of Component 1, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how much would you say has been accomplished so far?</i>	
	<i>Producto 1.1.1: Documento de Política Nacional de Bioseguridad;</i>	<i>Output 1.1.1 National Policy Document on Biosafety;</i>	Average rating: 3.5
	<i>Producto 1.1.2: Las autoridades nacionales competentes son definidas y nombradas;</i>	<i>Output 1.1.2 National competent authorities defined and appointed;</i>	Average rating: 2.8
	<i>Producto 1.1.3: Desarrollo de normas sectoriales/reglamentos y directrices para la gestión de los OGM y la información asociada, por parte de las autoridades nacionales competentes;</i>	<i>Output 1.1.3 Sectorial rules/resolutions and guidelines for the management of GMOs and associated information, by the competent national authorities;</i>	Average rating: 1.8

Reference	Original Text in Spanish	English Translation	Results
	<i>Producto 1.1.4: Desarrollo de directrices y manuales de procedimientos para los usuarios de OGM, incluidos los importadores/exportadores, productores, industria de transformación y los investigadores;</i>	<i>Output 1.1.4 Guidelines and procedural manuals for GMO participants, including importers / exporters, producers, processing industry and researchers;</i>	Average rating: 2.5
	<i>Producto 1.1.5: Desarrollo de formas administrativas y técnicas para las aplicaciones de los OGM.</i>	<i>Output 1.1.5 Administrative and technical forms for GMO applications.</i>	Average rating: 2.7
Q4.1.5.1.4	(opcional) - En su opinión, ¿cómo se podrían mejorar los logros anteriores?	<i>(optional) - In your opinion, how the above accomplishments could be improved?</i>	<i>This 'free text' question received 5 responses (see summary below)</i>
<i>[Summary]</i>	<i>Respondents highlighted the need of a higher political support to the matter or of ensuring continuity with the workshops organized so far.</i>		
<i>[Flow]</i>	<i>[All participants from this section were directed to section 5]</i>		
S4.1.5.2	Su contribución	<i>Your contribution</i>	<i>Respondents in this section: 8 (11.3%)</i>
<i>[Flow]</i>	<i>[This section only received participants who answered "2" to question Q4.1.5]</i>		
	Componente 2: Desarrollar una adecuada capacidad institucional y de recursos humanos para la toma de decisiones y cumplimiento de las regulaciones de bioseguridad.	<i>Component 2. Development of appropriate institutional and human capacity for decision-making and regulatory compliance in biosafety.</i>	
Q4.1.5.2.1	Con referencia a la implementación del Componente 2 (ver texto arriba), en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿qué tan significativa calificaría su contribución personal?	<i>With reference to the Component 2 (see text above), on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how would you rate your personal contribution to its implementation?</i>	Average rating: 3.4
	Componente 2. Resultados esperados:	<i>Component 2. Expected Outcome(s):</i>	
Q4.1.5.2.2	Con referencia a cada uno de los Resultados esperados del Componente 2, en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿en qué medida diría que se han logrado hasta ahora?	<i>With reference to each the Expected Outcome(s) of Component 2, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how much would you say has been accomplished so far?</i>	

Reference	Original Text in Spanish	English Translation	Results
	<i>Resultado 2.1 Se refuerza el marco institucional y administrativo para brindar respuestas efectivas a las aplicaciones de OGM y comunicar las decisiones de acuerdo con el PCB;</i>	<i>Outcome 2.1 The institutional and administrative framework is reinforced to provide effective responses to GMO applications and communicate decisions in line with the CPB;</i>	Average rating: 3.3
	<i>Resultado 2.2. Existe una mayor capacidad humana, claridad, bases científicas y tecnológicas para tomar decisiones respecto a los OGM;</i>	<i>Outcome 2.2. There is greater human capacity, clarity, scientific and technological bases to make decisions regarding GMOs;</i>	Average rating: 3.8
	<i>Resultado 2.3. Existe mayor capacidad humana, claridad, ciencia y tecnología para controlar / monitorear las actividades con OGM en el país.</i>	<i>Outcome 2.3. There is greater human capacity, clarity, scientific and technology to control / monitor activities with GMOs in the country.</i>	Average rating: 3.1
	Componente 2. Productos esperados:	Component 2. Expected Output(s):	
Q4.1.5.2.3	(opcional) - Con referencia a cada uno de los Productos esperados del Componente 2, en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿en qué medida diría que se han logrado hasta ahora?	<i>(optional) - With reference to the Expected Output(s) of Component 2, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how much would you say has been accomplished so far?</i>	
	<i>Producto 2.1.1 Sistema de administración centralizado para manejar aplicaciones con OGM, incluye la "ventanilla única centralizada";</i>	<i>Output 2.1.1 Centralized administrative system to handle applications with GMOs including a "single-centralized window";</i>	Average rating: 2.4
	<i>Producto 2.1.2 Secretaría Técnica de la Comisión Nacional de Bioseguridad en funcionamiento;</i>	<i>Output 2.1.2 Technical Secretariat of the National Biosafety Committee created with specialized technical personnel;</i>	Average rating: 2.4
	<i>Producto 2.2.1 Validación de procesos de evaluación de riesgos ambientales de salud por las autoridades nacionales competentes;</i>	<i>Output 2.2.1 Evaluation processes of environmental and health risks validated by the national authorities responsible for different uses of GMOs;</i>	Average rating: 2.5

Reference	Original Text in Spanish	English Translation	Results
	<i>Producto 2.3.1 Personal especializado y capacitado para realizar las tareas de supervisión y detección de OGM en los puertos marítimos, aeropuertos y puestos de control aduanero.</i>	<i>Output 2.3.1 Specialized personnel trained to perform the tasks of monitoring and detection of GMOs at sea ports, airports and customs checkpoints;</i>	Average rating: 2.3
	<i>Producto 2.3.2 Mecanismos establecidos para el control de riesgos y la gestión, incluyendo métodos de detección y trazabilidad de OGM. Protocolos de contingencia para respuesta de emergencia en caso de accidentes relacionados con los OGM.</i>	<i>Output 2.3.2 Mechanisms established for risk control and management, including technology and methods for GMO traceability/ detection, and contingency protocols for emergency response in case of accidents involving GMOs.</i>	Average rating: 2.0
Q4.1.5.2.4	(opcional) - En su opinión, ¿cómo se podrían mejorar los logros anteriores?	<i>(optional) - In your opinion, how the above accomplishments could be improved?</i>	<i>This 'free text' question received 3 responses (see summary below)</i>
<i>[Summary]</i>	<i>Respondents highlighted the needs for a better risk assessment system and for implementing the single-centralized window system for managing all administrative procedures.</i>		
<i>[Flow]</i>	<i>[All participants from this section were directed to section 5]</i>		
S4.1.5.3	Su contribución	Your contribution	Respondents in this section: 9 (12.7%)
<i>[Flow]</i>	<i>[This section only received participants who answered "3" to question Q4.1.5]</i>		
	Componente 3: Desarrollar capacidades adecuadas para la participación pública en la toma de decisiones.	<i>Component 3. Development of appropriate capacities for public participation in decision-making.</i>	
Q4.1.5.3.1	Con referencia a la implementación del Componente 3 (ver texto arriba), en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿qué tan significativa calificaría su contribución personal?	<i>With reference to the Component 3 (see text above), on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how would you rate your personal contribution to its implementation?</i>	Average rating: 3.8
	Componente 3. Resultados esperados:	<i>Component 3. Expected Outcome(s):</i>	
Q4.1.5.3.2	Con referencia a cada uno de los Resultados esperados del Componente 3, en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿en qué medida diría que se han logrado hasta ahora?	<i>With reference to each the Expected Outcome(s) of Component 3, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how much would you say has been accomplished so far?</i>	

Reference	Original Text in Spanish	English Translation	Results
	<i>Resultado 3.1. Incrementar el nivel de comprensión pública de la bioseguridad a través de operaciones basadas en diagnósticos participativos;</i>	<i>Outcome 3.1. Increase the level of public understanding of biosafety through operations based on participatory diagnosis;</i>	Average rating: 3.0
	<i>Resultado 3.2. Se promueve y sistematiza la participación ciudadana en los procesos de toma de decisiones sobre OGM;</i>	<i>Outcome 3.2. Public participation in decision-making processes on GMOs is promoted and systematized;</i>	Average rating: 3.2
	<i>Resultado 3.3. Se apoya un sistema gubernamental coordinado para el acceso público a la información sobre bioseguridad de conformidad con el artículo 20 del Protocolo de Cartagena sobre Seguridad de la Biotecnología.</i>	<i>Outcome 3.3. A coordinated governmental system for public access to information on biosafety is supported in accordance with Article 20 of the CPB.</i>	Average rating: 3.3
	Componente 3. Productos esperados:	Component 3. Expected Output(s):	
Q4.1.5.3.3	(opcional) - Con referencia a cada uno de los Productos esperados del Componente 3, en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿en qué medida diría que se han logrado hasta ahora?	<i>(optional) - With reference to the Expected Output(s) of Component 3, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how much would you say has been accomplished so far?</i>	
	<i>Producto 3.1.1 Encuestas y análisis de tendencias en el nivel de información, sensibilización y cambios en la opinión pública acerca de la biotecnología, la bioseguridad y los OGM;</i>	<i>Output 3.1.1 Surveys and trend analysis on the level of information, awareness and changes in public opinion about biotechnology, biosafety and GMOs;</i>	Average rating: 2.9
	<i>Producto 3.1.2 Sensibilización e información sobre los OGM y la biotecnología incluida la difusión a través de sitios web;</i>	<i>Output 3.1.2 National Public Awareness and Information on GMOs and biotechnology including dissemination through websites;</i>	Average rating: 3.0
	<i>Producto 3.2.1 Establecimiento de estructuras y mecanismos de participación como parte del proceso, incluyendo un Centro de Reclamaciones y el sistema de preguntas y respuestas;</i>	<i>Output 3.2.1 Participation structures and mechanisms as part of authorization process of GMOs, including a Claims Desk and Question and Answers system;</i>	Average rating: 2.8

Reference	Original Text in Spanish	English Translation	Results
	<i>Producto 3.2.2 Foros de discusión con el sector privado para intercambiar puntos de vista y consultas;</i>	<i>Output 3.2.2 Discussion forums with the private sector to exchange views and queries;</i>	<i>Average rating: 2.3</i>
	<i>Producto 3.3.1 Publicación de la información sectorial sobre los OGM presentes y/o autorizados por el país.</i>	<i>Output 3.3.1 Public, up to date sectorial information regarding GMOs present and/or authorized by the country.</i>	<i>Average rating: 2.4</i>
Q4.1.5.3.4	(opcional) - En su opinión, ¿cómo se podrían mejorar los logros anteriores?	<i>(optional) - In your opinion, how the above accomplishments could be improved?</i>	<i>This 'free text' question received 3 responses (see summary below)</i>
<i>[Summary]</i>	<i>Respondents highlighted the need for promoting the Project website and strengthening the informative campaign.</i>		
<i>[Flow]</i>	<i>[All participants from this section were directed to section 5]</i>		
S4.1.5.4	Su contribución	<i>Your contribution</i>	<i>Respondents in this section: 14 (19.7%)</i>
<i>[Flow]</i>	<i>[This section only received participants who answered "4" to question Q4.1.5]</i>		
	Componente 4: Fortalecimiento de la infraestructura para la detección y la gestión de riesgos de los OGM en Venezuela.	<i>Component 4. Strengthening of infrastructure for the detection and management of GMOs.</i>	
Q4.1.5.4.1	Con referencia a la implementación del componente 4 (ver texto arriba), en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿qué tan significativa calificaría su contribución personal?	<i>With reference to the Component 4 (see text above), on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how would you rate your personal contribution to its implementation?</i>	<i>Average rating: 3.9</i>
	Componente 4. Resultados esperados:	<i>Component 4. Expected Outcome(s):</i>	
Q4.1.5.4.2	Con referencia a cada uno de los Resultados esperados del Componente 4, en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿en qué medida diría que se ha logrado hasta ahora?	<i>(optional) - With reference to the Expected Outcome(s) of Component 4, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how much would you say has been accomplished so far?</i>	

Reference	Original Text in Spanish	English Translation	Results
	Resultado 4.1. Equipar y operar el Laboratorio de Referencia para la Detección de OGM del Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ecosocialismo (MINEC), el organismo rector de bioseguridad en Venezuela, responsable de la supervisión y control de OGM en el país.	Outcome 4.1 Equip and operate the Reference Laboratory for Detection of LMOs of the Ministry of Popular Power for the Environment, the lead agency for Biosafety in Venezuela, responsible for supervision and control of LMOs in the country.	Average rating: 3.1
	Componente 4. Productos esperados:	Component 4. Expected Output(s):	
Q4.1.5.4.3	(opcional) - Con referencia a cada uno de los Productos esperados del componente 4 (ver texto arriba), en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿en qué medida diría que se ha logrado hasta ahora?	(optional) - With reference to the Expected Output(s) of Component 4 (see text above), on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how much would you say has been accomplished so far?	
	Producto 4.1.1 Un laboratorio operativo con la infraestructura necesaria para llevar a cabo el análisis y detección de OGM, lo que permitirá a Venezuela cumplir con sus obligaciones en virtud del Protocolo de Cartagena sobre Seguridad de la Biotecnología.	Output 4.1.1 An operational laboratory that has the necessary infrastructure to carry out analysis and detection of GMOs, which allows Venezuela to meet its obligations under the CPB.	Average rating: 3.2
Q4.1.5.4.4	(opcional) - En su opinión, ¿cómo se podrían mejorar los logros anteriores?	(optional) - In your opinion, how the above accomplishments could be improved?	This 'free text' question received 7 responses (see summary below)
[Summary]	Most comments focused on the slowness of the laboratory implementation.		
[Flow]	[All participants from this section were directed to section 5]		
S4.2	Su experiencia	Your experience	Respondents in this section: 33 (46.5%)
[Flow]	[This section only received participants who answered "1" to question Q1.2 or "No" to question Q3.1]		
Q4.2.1	¿Hay algún componente específico del proyecto que haya seguido más en detalle?	Is there any specific component(s) of the Project that you have been following more in details?	No. of respondents and percentage vs. the total number of participants
	1. Finalización y operación del marco legal de bioseguridad;	1. Completion and operation of biosafety legal framework;	1 (3.0%)

Reference	Original Text in Spanish	English Translation	Results
	2. Desarrollo de la capacidad institucional y humana adecuada para la toma de decisiones y el cumplimiento normativo en bioseguridad;	2. Development of appropriate institutional and human capacity for decision-making and regulatory compliance in biosafety;	10 (30.3%)
	3. Desarrollo de capacidades adecuadas para la participación pública en la toma de decisiones;	3. Development of appropriate capacities for public participation in decision-making;	4 (12.1%)
	4. Fortalecimiento de la infraestructura para la detección y manejo de OGM;	4. Strengthening of infrastructure for the detection and management of LMOs;	9 (27.3%)
	5. Ninguna	5. None	9 (27.3%)
[Flow]	<i>[Participants were directed to the section corresponding to the component indicated in question Q4.2.1: S4.2.1.1, S4.2.1.2, S4.2.1.3 and S4.2.1.4; participants who answered "None" were directed to S5]</i>		
S4.2.1.1	Su experiencia	Your experience	Respondents in this section: 1 (1.4%)
[Flow]	<i>[This section only received participants who answered "1" to question Q4.2.1]</i>		
	Componente 1: Actualizar y poner en operación el marco jurídico de bioseguridad.	Component 1. Completion and operation of biosafety legal framework.	
Q4.2.1.1.1	Con referencia al Componente 1 (ver texto arriba), en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿qué tan positiva calificaría la implementación lograda hasta ahora por el proyecto?	<i>With reference to the Component 1 (see text above), on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how would you rate its implementation achieved so far by the Project?</i>	Average rating: 4
Q4.2.1.1.2	(opcional) - En su opinión, ¿cómo se podría mejorar el logro anterior?	<i>(optional) - In your opinion, how the above accomplishment could be improved?</i>	This 'free text' question received 1 responses (see summary below)
[Summary]	One comment stressed the high complexity of implementing the legal framework		
[Flow]	<i>[All participants from this section were directed to section 5]</i>		
S4.2.1.2	Su experiencia	Your experience	Respondents in this section: 10 (14.1%)
[Flow]	<i>[This section only received participants who answered "2" to question Q4.2.1]</i>		

Reference	Original Text in Spanish	English Translation	Results
	Componente 2: Desarrollar una adecuada capacidad institucional y de recursos humanos para la toma de decisiones y cumplimiento de las regulaciones en bioseguridad.	Component 2. Development of appropriate institutional and human capacity for decision-making and regulatory compliance in biosafety.	
Q4.2.1.2.1	Con referencia al Componente 2 (ver texto arriba), en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿qué tan positiva calificaría la implementación lograda hasta ahora por el proyecto?	With reference to the Component 2 (see text above), on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how would you rate its implementation achieved so far by the Project?	Average rating: 2.6
Q4.2.1.2.2	(opcional) - En su opinión, ¿cómo se podría mejorar el logro anterior?	(optional) - In your opinion, how the above accomplishment could be improved?	This 'free text' question received 4 responses (see summary below)
[Summary]	All respondents focused on the need for further capacity building.		
[Flow]	[All participants from this section were directed to section 5]		
S4.2.1.3	Su experiencia	Your experience	Respondents in this section: 4 (5.6%)
[Flow]	[This section only received participants who answered "3" to question Q4.2.1]		
	Componente 3: Desarrollar capacidades adecuadas para la participación pública en la toma de decisiones.	Component 3. Development of appropriate capacities for public participation in decision-making.	
Q4.2.1.3.1	Con referencia al Componente 3 (ver texto arriba), en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿qué tan positiva calificaría la implementación lograda hasta ahora por el proyecto?	With reference to the Component 3 (see text above), on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how would you rate its implementation achieved so far by the Project?	Average rating: 2.5
Q4.2.1.3.2	(opcional) - En su opinión, ¿cómo se podría mejorar el logro anterior?	(optional) - In your opinion, how the above accomplishment could be improved?	This 'free text' question received 1 responses (see summary below)
[Summary]	A respondent highlighted the need of a better involvement of grassroots organizations with competence on the matter.		
[Flow]	[All participants from this section were directed to section 5]		
S4.2.1.4	Su experiencia	Your experience	Respondents in this section: 9 (12.7%)
[Flow]	[This section only received participants who answered "4" to question Q4.2.1]		

Reference	Original Text in Spanish	English Translation	Results
	Componente 4: Fortalecimiento de la infraestructura para la detección y la gestión de riesgos de los OGM en Venezuela.	Component 4. Strengthening of infrastructure for the detection and management of GMOs.	
Q4.2.1.4.1	Con referencia al componente 4 (ver texto arriba), en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿qué tan positiva calificaría la implementación lograda hasta ahora por el proyecto?	With reference to the Component 4 (see text above), on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how would you rate its implementation achieved so far by the Project?	Average rating: 3
Q4.2.1.4.2	(opcional) - En su opinión, ¿cómo se podría mejorar el logro anterior?	(optional) - In your opinion, how the above accomplishment could be improved?	This 'free text' question received 5 responses (see summary below)
[Summary]	Most respondents focused on the need for strengthening the infrastructure and increasing the involvement of trained scientists.		
[Flow]	[All participants from this section were directed to section 5]		
S5	Información sobre el proyecto	Information about the Project	Respondents in this section: 71 (100%)
[Flow]	[This section was for all participants; it also directly received participants who answered "0" to question Q1.2 or who answered "None" to question Q4.2.1]		
Q5.1	En general, en una escala de 0 (min.) a 5 (máx.), ¿qué tan satisfecho está con la información recibida hasta ahora sobre el proyecto y su progreso?	In general, on a scale from 0 (min.) to 5 (max.), how satisfied you are with the information received so far about the Project and its progressing?	Average rating: 3.2
Q5.2	(opcional) - ¿Hay algún grupo específico con interés en el proyecto que en su opinión podría participar más en su implementación?	(optional) - Is there any specific group of stakeholder you would like to suggest which could be more involved in the Project implementation?	This 'free text' question received 32 responses (see summary below)
[Summary]	Most respondents proposed a better involvement of their groups of origin; the majority suggested stronger association with the scientific community; other suggestions indicated custom officers, medium and large farmers, indigenous communities, related institutions, and non-governmental organizations.		
Q5.3	(opcional) - ¿Le gustaría sugerir algún medio / canal / otra forma específica que en su opinión se podría utilizar para proporcionar más información sobre el proyecto?	(optional) - Is there any specific media/channel/other way you would like to suggest which could be used for providing more information about the Project?	This 'free text' question received 48 responses (see summary below)

Reference	Original Text in Spanish	English Translation	Results
[Summary]	The vast majority of the respondents suggested a better use of social networks for reaching a wider audience; in particular it was suggested the use of applications available through cell phones such as Telegram, Twitter, Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram and Youtube; another significant group of responses highlighted that in the countryside radio programs may be more successful than digital platforms; other respondents stressed the importance of using of the Project website, the BCH, or a direct approach with identified social groups such as scientists, farmers, industry, traders, etc.		
Q5.4	(opcional) - Aquí puede escribir sus comentarios generales sobre el proyecto.	(optional) - Here you may write your general comments on the implementation Project	This 'free text' question received 26 responses (see summary below)
[Summary]	Most of the respondents praised the Project Team for their work and expressed appreciation for the whole Project; specific comments highlighted the need for wider information, faster process for the equipment of the laboratory, and larger inter-institutional support.		
Q5.5	¿Estaría disponible para una entrevista directa sobre su opinión en la implementación del proyecto? [En caso de una respuesta positiva, deje sus datos de contacto]	Would you be available for an online direct interview about your opinion on the Project implementation? [in case of a positive answer, please leave your contact details]	Yes: 48 (67.6%) No: 23 (32.4%)
Q5.6	(opcional) - Aquí puede escribir sus comentarios sobre esta encuesta	(optional) - Here you may write your comments on this survey	This 'free text' question received 30 responses (see summary below)
[Summary]	Respondents generally expressed appreciation for the survey and recommended further involvement of the general public and follow up; few respondents highlighted the fact that often, in some part of the country, the slowness of the internet connection may not be adequate for using internet surveys.		
[Flow]	[All participants from this section continued to section 6]		
S6	Sus datos de contacto	Your contact details	Respondents in this section: 60 (84.5%)
[Flow]	[This section was for all participants]		
Q6.1	(opcional) - Nombre y apellidos	(optional) - Name and Surname	
Q6.2	(opcional) - Teléfono	(optional) - Phone	
Q6.3	(opcional) - Correo electrónico	(optional) - E-mail address	
¡Muchas gracias!		Thank You!	

ANNEX VI. BRIEF CV OF THE REVIEWER

Name	Giovanni Ferraiolo
Profession	former UNEP/SCBD Programme Officer (Biosafety), retired
Nationality	Italian
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced degree in Plant Genetics • Post-degree Specialization in Plant Biotechnology
Short biography	<p><i>Giovanni Ferraiolo graduated in plant genetics and specialized in plant biotechnology. He conducted scientific studies in many biotech laboratories (including University of Naples, Italy; International Centre of Potato - CIP Lima, Peru; University of Valdivia, Chile; Fruit Trees Research Institute, Roma, Italy; and International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology - ICGEB, New Delhi, India). From 1997, he has been working on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, with UNIDO, Wien, Austria; ICGEB, Trieste, Italy; and from 2001 with UN Environment Programme, first as Regional Coordinator of the UNEP-GEF Project for the Development of National Biosafety Frameworks (GRULAC region) and then as Programme Officer at the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD), in charge of the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH). He retired in 2015 and, to date, occasionally works as a consultant on matters related to biosafety and/or knowledge management (e-mail: giovanni.ferraiolo@gmail.com)</i></p>

ANNEX VII. REVIEW TORs (WITHOUT ANNEXES)

MTR ToRs available in the next page.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Mid-Term Review of the UN Environment Programme /Global Environment Facility project "Implementation of the National Biosafety Framework in Venezuela in Accordance to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety"

Section 1: PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

1. Project General Information

Table 1. Project summary

Sub-programme:	Environmental governance	Expected Accomplishment(s):	A biosafety legal framework is completed and operational. Institutional and human capacity for decision making and regulatory compliance in biosafety, as well as capacities for public participation in decision-making, are developed. Infrastructure for the detection and management of GMOs are strengthened.	
UN Environment approval date:	1 August 2013	Programme of Work Output(s):	Programme of Work for the Biennium 2018-2019 Subprogramme 3 – Healthy and productive ecosystems Subprogramme 4 – Environmental governance	
GEF project ID:	5290	Project type:	Medium-sized Project	
GEF Operational Programme #:	GFL-11207-14AC0003-SB-008055	Focal Area(s):	Biodiversity	
GEF approval date:	24 February 2017	GEF Strategic Priority:	BD-3	
Expected start date:	2017	Actual start date:	9 August 2017	
Planned completion date:	8 August 2021	Actual completion date:	N/A	
Planned project budget at approval:	USD 4,011,714	Actual total expenditures reported as of [31/06/2020]:	USD 2,175,419.12	
GEF grant allocation:	USD 1,860,000	GEF grant expenditures reported as of [31/06/2020]:	USD 610,481.38	
Project Preparation Grant - GEF financing:	USD 54,714	Project Preparation Grant - co-financing:	USD 25,000	
Expected Medium-Size Project co-financing:	USD 2,072,000	Secured Medium-Size Project/Full-Size Project co-financing:	USD 1,564,937.74	
First disbursement:	13 September 2017	Date of financial closure:	30 April 2022	
No. of revisions:	04	Date of last revision:	June-2020	
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	N/A	Date of last/next Steering Committee meeting:	Last: N/A	Next: N/A
Mid-term Review (planned date):	Oct 2020-Jan 2021	Mid-term Review/ Evaluation (actual date):	4th quarter 2020	

Terminal Evaluation (planned date):	N/A	Terminal Evaluation (actual date):	<i>Not applicable</i>
Coverage - Country(ies):	Venezuela	Coverage - Region(s):	Latin America and Caribbean
Dates of previous project phases:	<i>Not applicable</i>	Status of future project phases:	<i>Not applicable</i>

2. Project rationale

1. In accordance with the Government's national priorities, as well as with the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and GEF Biodiversity Focal Area, and with special focus on the GEF strategic objective BS-3 on supporting the complete and effective implementation of the Cartagena and Nagoya Protocols, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela submitted, in February 2013 in collaboration with UN ENVIRONMENT, a proposal to the GEF Secretariat for a medium-size project for the implementation of the National Biosafety Framework in Venezuela in accordance to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The GEF Secretariat approved the project concept in August 2013 and project execution initiated in February 2017.

3. Project objectives and components

2. The overall objective of the project is to establish a platform of legislative, regulatory, social and infrastructure to implement the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB) in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in order to contribute to the global conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

3. The approved project's workplan foresees four substantive components plus an operational one related to monitoring and evaluation and project operations:

- **Component 1:** *Completion and operation of biosafety legal framework.* **Expected Outcome:** Regulatory biosafety framework is completed, adopted and integrated within the National Strategy for the Conservation of Biodiversity 2010-2020 and its National Action Plan.
- **Component 2:** *Development of appropriate institutional and human capacity for decision-making and regulatory compliance in biosafety.* **Expected Outcomes:** a) the institutional and administrative framework is reinforced to provide effective responses to LMO applications and communicate decisions in line with the CPB; b) there is greater human capacity, clarity, scientific and technological bases to make decisions regarding LMOs; and c) there is greater human capacity, clarity, scientific and technology to control / monitor activities with LMOs in the country.
- **Component 3:** *Development of appropriate capacities for public participation in decision-making.* **Expected Outcomes:** a) increase the level of public understanding of biosafety through operations based on participatory diagnosis; b) public participation in decision-making processes on LMOs is promoted and systematized; and c) a coordinated governmental system for public access to information on biosafety is supported in accordance with Article 20 of the CPB.
- **Component 4:** *Strengthening of infrastructure for the detection and management of LMOs.* **Expected Outcome:** equip and operate the Reference Laboratory for Detection of LMOs of the Ministry of Popular Power for the Environment, the lead agency for Biosafety in Venezuela, responsible for supervision and control of LMO's in the country.
- **Component 5:** *M&E and project operations.* **Expected Outcome:** project executed in a timely manner, achieving outcomes and producing high quality outputs.

4. Executing Arrangements

4. As indicated by the GEF Operational Focal Point in its endorsement, UN Environment is the GEF implementing agency of the project and its executing partners are: UNDP, the fund management agency in charge of project funding administration, and the *Oficina de Integración y Asuntos Internacionales* of the *Ministerio del Poder Popular para el Ecosocialismo* - MINEC (Office of Integration and International Affairs of the Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism - MINEC), identified as the national agency in charge of the project.

Project structure

5. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the *Ministry of Popular Power for Ecosocialism* (MINEC) is the National Environmental Authority and the operational and technical focal point of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It coordinates the implementation of the provisions of the CBD and of the Cartagena Protocol on

Biosafety (CBP) at the national level. In this UN Environment/GEF project, MINEC, through its *Office of Integration and International Affairs*, acts as the *lead executing agency* and responsible for the decisions made in relation to the execution of the Project in accordance with the objectives and activities proposed in the PRODOC and PCA.

6. The **UNDP** acts as the *fund management agency* and assists MINEC in managing project funds. The UNDP is responsible for: *a)* reviewing ToRs, the consultants' selection process, contracts, as well as procuring personnel and equipment; *b)* executing all payments related to project activities; *c)* preparing the first version of the quarterly expense report to be discussed with MINEC and shared with UNEP (in this context MINEC must provide details about the co-financing data and activities as required by the report); *d)* ensuring that the payment to consultants is based on outcomes received; *e)* participating in M&E activities; and *f)* participating in the Monitoring Committee.

7. **UN Environment** serves as the *GEF implementing agency* and it is responsible for: *a)* supervising the project; *b)* monitoring the execution of activities; *c)* the revision and approval of financial and progress reports; *d)* releasing of funds; and *e)* the provision of technical support.

8. Additionally, the project structure foresees a *Project Management Unit (PMU)*; and an external *Steering Committee*.

9. The *Project Management Unit (PMU)* is responsible for the daily execution of the project, including all duties of reporting, monitoring and evaluation, as well as the monitoring of all contractual tasks. It is located at MINEC and will consist of *a)* the *National Project Coordinator (NPC)* working full time on the project; *b)* the Project Administrative Assistant; *c)* at least one part-time person from the executing agency to support the project processes; *d)* other personnel as needed; and *e)* a representative of the UNDP as fund management agency.

10. The *PMU's roles include*: *a)* ensuring the execution of the Project, including all technical aspects; *b)* ensuring project governance and oversight of GEF investment financial resources in collaboration with the third party that will manage project funds at the local level (UNDP); *c)* providing staff time and experience to guide and advance the project (at least one part-time person dedicated to the project + administrative support); *d)* providing project reports in accordance with the supervision plan in collaboration with a third party that will manage project funds at the local level (UNDP); *e)* sharing all project achievements and outputs with all relevant stakeholders and UN Environment; *f)* ensuring that consultants and project partner organizations deliver their reports according to their contracts and on time; *g)* organizing the Steering Committee meetings and act as its secretariat; *h)* general management and implementation of the Project's M&E framework, to evaluate project performance; *i)* management of the flow of information from the field to project collaborators, and preparation of periodic monitoring reports;

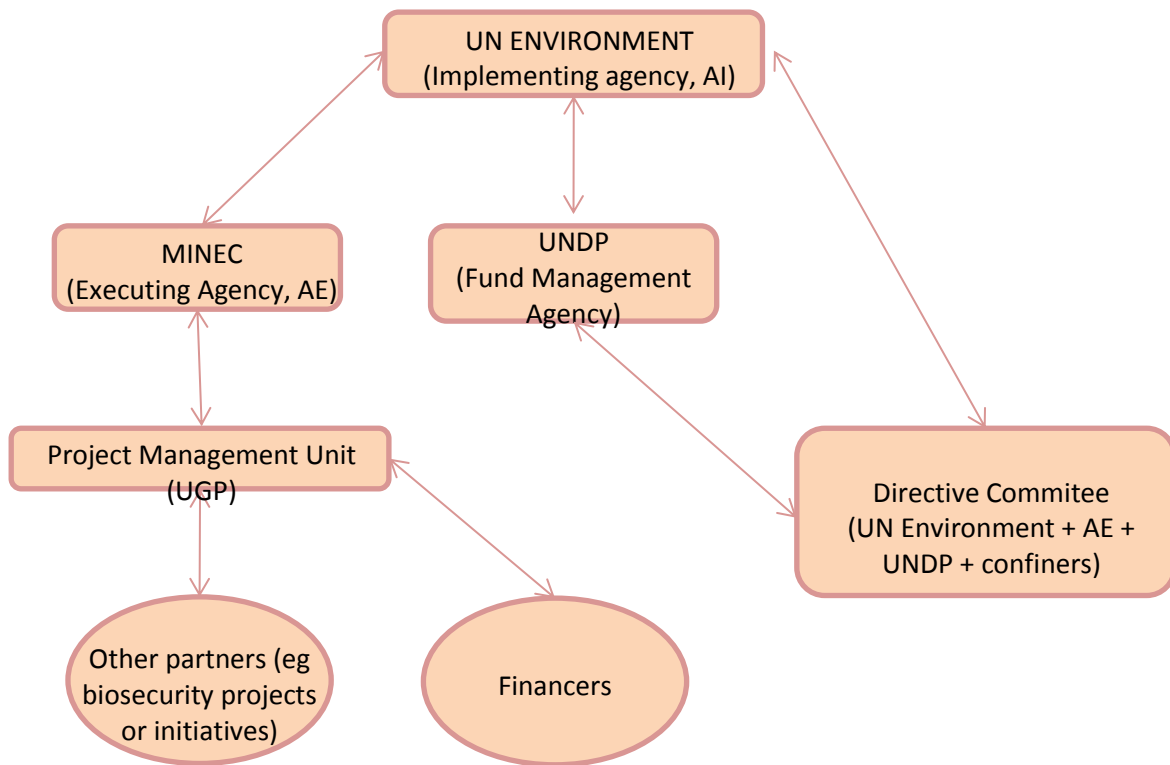
The *National Project Coordinator (NPC)*, identified by the MINEC within the personnel of its *Dirección General de Diversidad Biológica* (General Directorate of Biological Diversity), is responsible for the daily coordination of the project activities and liaise with all project's stakeholders. *NPC's roles include*: *a)* supervising the consultants and transfer proof of their technical outcomes to the *General Directorate of the Project* (represented by the MINEC's *Oficina de Integración y Asuntos Internacionales*, and assisted by the *Dirección General de Diversidad Biológica*) which in turn will transmit them to UNDP for the necessary payments; *b)* uploading in ANUBIS all the products of the consultancies, meeting minutes and any other document that proves the progress of the project, in close collaboration with the *General Directorate of the Project*; *c)* participating in M&E activities; *d)* reviewing consultants' outcomes and products according to their ToRs; *e)* reviewing the first version of the expenditure reports submitted by UNDP, complementing the information and including the data on co-financing; *f)* uploading the signed reports on ANUBIS; *g)* preparing progress reports; and *h)* leading the meetings of the *General Directorate of the Project*.

11. The external Steering Committee *will be chaired* by the MINEC, and will be in charge of project supervision and general orientation. It will meet at least annually or according to the needs of the project.

Collaborators of the project:

12. Associated organizations, ministries, scientific institutions, etc. will participate in the project, in order to provide specialized knowledge in knowledge management, periodic updates of biosafety activities in the country, support the project with solid field data on biosafety issues, and establish links with stakeholders.

13. The detail of the project structure is shown in the following diagram:



5. Project Cost and Financing

14. The project falls under the GEF Medium-size Project category (GEF-MSP), with an overall project budget of USD 3,932,000, made up of a GEF allocation of USD 1,860,000 and co-financing support of USD 2,072,000 from various partners and agencies of the Government, both in cash and in-kind. The table below presents total estimated project cost at design, broken down per component and per funding source.

Table 2. Total estimated project cost

Project Component	GEF Trust Fund (USD)	Cofinancing (USD)
<i>1. Completion and operation of biosafety legal framework</i>	234,000	500,000
<i>2. Completion and operation of biosafety legal framework</i>	369,500	400,000
<i>3. Development of appropriate capacities for public participation in decision-making.</i>	153,686	400,000
<i>4. Strengthening of infrastructure for the detection and management of LMOs.</i>	849,814	700,000
<i>5. M&E and project operations</i>	98,000	
Subtotal	1,705,000	2,000,000
Project management Cost	155,000	72,000
Total project costs	1,860,000	2,072,000

6. Implementation Issues

15. The project has experienced significant delays in terms of execution of some project activities, due to the following reasons: factors external to the project associated with macro-economic measures, delays in funds disbursement and, as of recent, the Covid-19 pandemic. There have been delays in funds disbursement and procurement of equipment by the fund management agency, which, together with the macroeconomic context, translated into a slow financial execution of the project as already reported in all PIRs. In August 2018, the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela announced a "major monetary and economic reconversion" (in: Decree on the State of Economic Emergency, Official Gazette No. 41,478 of 09/10/2018), which substantially led to a sharp decrease in the salaries of the project consultants and triggered the Project Management Unit (PMU) and UN Environment to negotiate a solution with UNDP as the fund management agency. Taking into account the macroeconomic situation and after a long negotiation process with UNDP headquarters, the consultants' contracts were cancelled and later reissued with a change in the currency of payment from Bolivars to US dollars. This led to a long period of close to no execution of GEF funds in the 2018-2019 financial year.

16. This long negotiation extended until April 2019. Thus, rendering the fund management agency from move forward with the hiring of the nine project consultants requested by the PMU; a process that took 16 weeks to complete and was finally achieved in mid-July 2019. Among other difficulties, all consultancies outcomes were correlated, and required a parallel advance of them all.

17. Also, the procurement process to buy part of the laboratory equipment has been very slow (approximately 60 weeks), and the equipment, as of today, has not yet reached the country. While delays have far preceded the Covid-19 crisis, the pandemic has affected delays in the past months. This delay directly affected the execution period of various activities and specifically influenced the delivery outcomes of 2 consultants in charge of installing the equipment, set it into operation and carry out maintenance plans. This obviously also affected the overall project schedule. In addition, the PMU expresses a particular concern about possible planned obsolescence of the equipment (due to the time elapsed between the contract request and the time of its arrival in the country) which could add even more difficulties, for example in locating spare parts, among others.

18. Since new equipment acquisitions are required, procurement process needs definitely to be improved and mitigation measures have been sought in collaboration with the fund management and the implementing agencies. These measures are expected to have a positive impact on the reduction of the procurement times and aim to a faster implementation of any future acquisition plan in order to set up the total equipment and the improvements in the infrastructure of the laboratory, as foreseen by the project document and without further delays.

19. It is also worth to mention that, in further complicating the project's acquisition process, UN Environment and UNDP financial procedures are substantially different. In particular, while UN Environment authorizes further disbursement of funds only when 30% of the financial execution is completed, the UNDP commits all funds at the

time of the initial contract making those funds unavailable even in case of a major delay in the implementation. These differences have caused significant distress in the project execution to the Project Management Unit, especially when considering the late arrival of the teams for the reasons mentioned above.

20. Another important element that has strongly delayed the fund management is the pandemic that has been experienced in the world since December 2019, and felt in Latin America in March 2020, which affected the work plan envisaged in the project in many areas such as workshops, subsistence payment, business meetings, laboratory equipment, among other activities.

21. Despite all of the above, the project continued to execute through MINEC human resources and other co-financing. On the one hand, GEF funds allowed for the production of excellent quality products and with national funds the Ministry continued with the General Coordination of the Project, ensuring the harmonization of its components. In addition, the work of the team of consultants, all highly committed, allowed the project to achieve a great advance in the percentage of implementation with outcomes of excellent quality by the consultants, who dedicated themselves full time to their activities.

Section 2. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

7. Key Review Principles

22. Review findings and judgements should be based on **sound evidence and analysis**, clearly documented in the review report. Information will be triangulated (i.e. verified from different sources) as far as possible, and when verification is not possible, the single source will be mentioned (whilst anonymity is still protected). Analysis leading to evaluative judgements should always be clearly spelled out.

23. **The “Why?” Question.**As this is a Mid-term Review particular attention should be given to identifying implementation challenges and risks to achieving the expected project objectives and sustainability. Therefore, the “Why?” question should be at the front of the consultants’ minds all through the review exercise and is supported by the use of a theory of change approach. This means that the consultants need to go beyond the assessment of “*what*” the project performance was, and make a serious effort to provide a deeper understanding of “*why*” the performance was as it was. This should provide the basis for the lessons that can be drawn from the project.

24. **Baselines and counterfactuals.** In attempting to attribute any outcomes and impacts to the project intervention, the reviewers should consider the difference between *what has happened with, and what would have happened without, the project*. This implies that there should be consideration of the baseline conditions, trends and counterfactuals in relation to the intended project outcomes and impacts. It also means that there should be plausible evidence to attribute such outcomes and impacts to the actions of the project. Sometimes, adequate information on baseline conditions, trends or counterfactuals is lacking. In such cases this should be clearly highlighted by the reviewers, along with any simplifying assumptions that were taken to enable the reviewer to make informed judgements about project performance.

25. **Communicating review results.**A key aim of the review is to encourage reflection and learning by MINEC, UN Environment and key project stakeholders. The consultant should consider how reflection and learning can be promoted, both through the review process and in the communication of review findings and key lessons. Clear and concise writing is required on all review deliverables. There may be several intended audiences, each with different interests and needs regarding the report. The National Project Coordinator will plan with the consultant(s) which audiences to target and the easiest and clearest way to communicate the key review findings and lessons to them. This may include some or all of the following; a webinar, conference calls with relevant stakeholders, the preparation of a review brief or interactive presentation. Draft and final versions of the Main Review Report will be shared with key stakeholders by the National Project Coordinator and a copy of the final version will be submitted to the UN Environment Evaluation Office.

8. Objective of the Review

26. In line with the UN Environment Evaluation Policy¹ and the UN Environment Programme Manual², the Mid-Term Review (MTR) is undertaken approximately half way through project implementation to analyze whether the project is on-track, what problems or challenges the project is encountering, and what corrective actions are required. The MTR will assess project performance to date (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine the likelihood of the project achieving its intended outcomes and impacts, including their sustainability. The review has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UN

¹ <http://www.unep.org/eou/StandardsPolicyandPractices/UNEPevaluationPolicy/tabid/3050/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

² http://www.unep.org/QAS/Documents/UNEP_Programme_Manual_May_2013.pdf. *This manual is under revision.*

Environment, UNDP and MINEC. Therefore, the review will identify lessons of operational relevance for future project formulation and implementation (especially for the remainder of the project).

9. Key Strategic Questions

27. In addition to the evaluation criteria outlined in Section 10 below, the review will address the **strategic questions** listed below. These are questions of interest to UN Environment and to which the project is believed to be able to make a substantive contribution:

- a) How has the project been implemented from an institutional point of view?
- b) How have different aspects of the project structure been approached? Is the project well structured?
- c) To what extent have project activities / objectives been achieved?
- d) What are the main lessons learned so far?
- e) "What are the main recommendations to address current challenges and avoid project limitations going forward?"

10. Evaluation Criteria

28. All evaluation criteria will be rated on a six-point scale. Sections A-I below, outline the scope of the criteria and a link to a table for recording the ratings is provided in Annex 1). A weightings table will be provided in excel format (link provided in Annex 1) to support the determination of an overall project rating. The set of evaluation criteria are grouped in nine categories: (A) Strategic Relevance; (B) Quality of Project Design; (C) Nature of External Context; (D) Effectiveness, which comprises assessments of the achievement of outputs, achievement of outcomes and likelihood of impact; (E) Financial Management; (F) Efficiency; (G) Monitoring and Reporting; (H) Sustainability; and (I) Factors Affecting Project Performance. The reviewer(s) can propose other review criteria as deemed appropriate.

A. Strategic Relevance

29. The review will assess, in line with the OECD/DAC definition of relevance, 'the extent to which the activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor'. The review will include an assessment of the project's relevance in relation to UN Environment's mandate and its alignment with UN Environment's policies and strategies at the time of project approval. Under strategic relevance an assessment of the complementarity of the project with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups will be made. This criterion comprises four elements:

i. *Alignment to the UN Environment Medium Term Strategy³ (MTS) and Programme of Work (POW)*

The review should assess the project's alignment with the MTS and POW under which the project was approved and include reflections on the scale and scope of any contributions made to the planned results reflected in the relevant MTS and POW.

ii. *Alignment to UN Environment /GEF/Donor Strategic Priorities*

Donor, including GEF, strategic priorities will vary across interventions. UN Environment strategic priorities include the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building⁴ (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (S-SC). The BSP relates to the capacity of governments to: comply with international agreements and obligations at the national level; promote, facilitate and finance environmentally sound technologies and to strengthen frameworks for developing coherent international environmental policies. S-SC is regarded as the exchange of resources, technology and knowledge between developing countries. GEF priorities are specified in published programming priorities and focal area strategies.

iii. *Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities*

The review will assess the extent to which the intervention is suited, or responding to, the stated environmental concerns and needs of the countries, sub-regions or regions where it is being implemented. Examples may include:

³UN Environment's Medium Term Strategy (MTS) is a document that guides UN Environment's programme planning over a four-year period. It identifies UN Environment's thematic priorities, known as Sub-programmes (SP), and sets out the desired outcomes, known as Expected Accomplishments (EAs), of the Sub-programmes.

⁴<http://www.unep.org/GC/GC23/documents/GC23-6-add-1.pdf>

national or sub-national development plans, poverty reduction strategies or Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) plans or regional agreements etc.

iv. *Complementarity with Existing Interventions*

An assessment will be made of how well the project, either at design stage or during the project mobilization, took account of ongoing and planned initiatives (under the same sub-programme, other UN Environment sub-programmes, or being implemented by other agencies) that address similar needs of the same target groups. The review will consider if the project team, in collaboration with Regional Offices and Sub-Programme Coordinators, made efforts to ensure their own intervention was complementary to other interventions, optimized any synergies and avoided duplication of effort. Examples may include UNDAFs or One UN programming. Linkages with other interventions should be described and instances where UN Environment's comparative advantage has been particularly well applied should be highlighted.

Factors affecting this criterion may include: stakeholders' participation and cooperation; responsiveness to human rights and gender equity and country ownership and driven-ness.

B. Quality of Project Design

30. The quality of project design is assessed using an agreed template during the review inception phase, ratings are attributed to identified criteria and an overall Project Design Quality rating is established. This overall Project Design Quality rating is entered in the final review ratings table as item B. In the Main Review Report a summary of the project's strengths and weaknesses at design stage is included.

Factors affecting this criterion may include (at the design stage): stakeholders participation and cooperation and responsiveness to human rights and gender equity, including the extent to which relevant actions are adequately budgeted for.

C. Nature of External Context

31. At review inception stage a rating is established for the project's external operating context (considering the prevalence of conflict, natural disasters and political upheaval). This rating is entered in the final review ratings table as item C. Where a project has been rated as facing either an Unfavourable or Highly Unfavourable and unexpected external operating context, the overall rating for Effectiveness may be increased at the discretion of the Review Consultant, MINEC and Task Manager together. A justification for such an increase must be given.

D. Effectiveness

32. The review will assess effectiveness across three dimensions: achievement of outputs, achievement of direct outcomes and likelihood of impact.

i. *Achievement of Outputs*

The review will assess the project's success in producing the programmed outputs (products and services delivered by the project itself) and achieving milestones as per the project design document (ProDoc). Any *formal* modifications/revisions made during project implementation will be considered part of the project design. Where the project outputs are inappropriately or inaccurately stated in the ProDoc, a table should be provided showing the original formulation and the amended version for transparency. The achievement of outputs will be assessed in terms of both quantity and quality, and the assessment will consider their usefulness and the timeliness of their delivery. The review will briefly explain the reasons behind the success or shortcomings of the project in delivering its programmed outputs and meeting expected quality standards.

Factors affecting this criterion may include: preparation and readiness and quality of project management and supervision⁵.

ii. *Achievement of Direct Outcomes*

The achievement of direct outcomes is assessed as performance against the direct outcomes as defined in the reconstructed⁶ Theory of Change. These are the first-level outcomes expected to be achieved as an immediate result

⁵In some cases 'project management and supervision' will refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UN Environment to implementing partners and national governments while in others, specifically for GEF funded projects, it will refer to the project management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping provided by UN Environment.

⁶ UN Environment staff are currently required to submit a Theory of Change with all submitted project designs. The level of 'reconstruction' needed during an evaluation will depend on the quality of this initial TOC, the time that has lapsed between project design and implementation (which may be related to securing and disbursing funds) and the level of any changes made to the project design. In the case of projects pre-

of project outputs. As in 1, above, a table can be used where substantive amendments to the formulation of direct outcomes is necessary. The review should report evidence of attribution between UN Environment's intervention and the direct outcomes. In cases of normative work or where several actors are collaborating to achieve common outcomes, evidence of the nature and magnitude of UN Environment's contribution should be included.

Factors affecting this criterion may include: quality of project management and supervision; stakeholders' participation and cooperation; responsiveness to human rights and gender equity and communication and public awareness.

iii. Likelihood of Impact

Based on the articulation of longer term effects in the reconstructed TOC (i.e. from direct outcomes, via intermediate states, to impact), the review will assess the likelihood of the intended, positive impacts becoming a reality. Project objectives or goals should be incorporated in the TOC, possibly as intermediate states or long term impacts. The Evaluation Office's approach to the use of TOC in project evaluations is outlined in a guidance note available on the EOU website, <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach> and is supported by an excel-based flow chart called, Likelihood of Impact Assessment (see Annex 1). Essentially the approach follows a 'likelihood tree' from direct outcomes to impacts, taking account of whether the assumptions and drivers identified in the reconstructed TOC held. Any unintended positive effects should also be identified and their causal linkages to the intended impact described.

33. The review will also consider the likelihood that the intervention may lead, or contribute to, unintended negative effects. Some of these potential negative effects may have been identified in the project design as risks or as part of the analysis of Environmental, Social and Economic Safeguards.⁷

34. The review will consider the extent to which the project has played a catalytic role or has promoted scaling up and/or replication⁸ as part of its Theory of Change and as factors that are likely to contribute to longer term impact. Ultimately UN Environment and all its partners aim to bring about benefits to the environment and human well-being. Few projects are likely to have impact statements that reflect such long-term or broad-based changes. However, the review will assess the likelihood of the project to make a substantive contribution to the high level changes represented by UN Environment's Expected Accomplishments, the Sustainable Development Goals⁹ and/or the high level results prioritised by the funding partner.

Factors affecting this criterion may include: quality of project management and supervision, including adaptive project management; stakeholders participation and cooperation; responsiveness to human rights and gender equity; country ownership and driven-ness and communication and public awareness.

E. Financial Management

35. Financial management will be assessed under three broad themes: completeness of financial information, communication between financial and project management staff and compliance with relevant UN financial management standards and procedures. The review will establish the actual spend across the life of the project of funds secured from all donors. This expenditure will be reported, where possible, at output level and will be compared with the approved budget. The review will assess the level of communication between the National Project Coordinator and Fund Management Agency as well as with the Implementing Agency as it relates to the effective delivery of the planned project and the needs of a responsive, adaptive management approach. The review will verify the application of proper financial management standards and adherence to UN Environment's and GEF's financial management policies. Any financial management issues that have affected the timely delivery of the project or the quality of its performance will be highlighted.

Factors affecting this criterion may include: preparation and readiness and quality of project management and supervision.

dating 2013 the intervention logic is often represented in a logical framework and a TOC will need to be constructed in the inception stage of the evaluation.

⁷Further information on Environmental, Social and Economic Safeguards (ESES) can be found at <http://www.unep.org/about/eses/>

⁸*Scaling up* refers to approaches being adopted on a much larger scale, but in a very similar context. *Scaling up* is often the longer term objective of pilot initiatives. *Replication* refers to approaches being repeated or lessons being explicitly applied in new/different contexts e.g. other geographic areas, different target group etc. Effective replication typically requires some form of revision or adaptation to the new context. It is possible to replicate at either the same or a different scale.

⁹A list of relevant SDGs is available on the EO website www.unep.org/evaluation

F. Efficiency

36. In keeping with the OECD/DAC definition of efficiency, the review will assess the cost-effectiveness and timeliness of project execution. Focussing on the translation of inputs into outputs, cost-effectiveness is the extent to which an intervention has achieved, or is expected to achieve, its results at the lowest possible cost. Timeliness refers to whether planned activities were delivered according to expected timeframes as well as whether events were sequenced efficiently. The review will also assess to what extent any project extension could have been avoided through stronger project management and identify any negative impacts caused by project delays or extensions. The review will describe any cost or time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe and consider whether the project was implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternative interventions or approaches.

37. The review will give special attention to efforts by the project teams to make use of/build upon pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc. to increase project efficiency. The review will also consider the extent to which the management of the project minimised UN Environment's environmental footprint.

Factors affecting this criterion may include: preparation and readiness (e.g. timeliness); quality of project management and supervision and stakeholders participation and cooperation.

G. Monitoring and Reporting

38. The review will assess monitoring and reporting across three sub-categories: monitoring design and budgeting, monitoring implementation and project reporting.

i. Monitoring Design and Budgeting

Each project should be supported by a sound monitoring plan that is designed to track progress against SMART¹⁰ indicators towards the achievement of the projects outputs and direct outcomes, including at a level disaggregated by gender or groups with low representation. The review will assess the quality of the design of the monitoring plan as well as the funds allocated for its implementation. The adequacy of resources for mid-term and terminal evaluation/review should be discussed if applicable.

ii. Monitoring Implementation

The review will assess whether the monitoring system was operational and facilitated the timely tracking of results and progress towards projects objectives throughout the project implementation period. It will also consider how information generated by the monitoring system during project implementation was used to adapt and improve project execution, achievement of outcomes and ensure sustainability. The review should confirm that funds allocated for monitoring were used to support this activity.

iii. Project Reporting

UN Environment has a centralised Project Management System for GEF Biodiversity and Land Degradation projects called Anubis, in which project managers upload six-monthly status reports against agreed project milestones, quarterly expenditure reports and all relevant information to project execution (ProDoc, annual work plan and budget, ToRs, main products, procurement plans, etc). This information will be provided to the Consultant(s) by the Project Management Unit and, where necessary, the Task Manager. Projects funded by GEF have additional requirements with regard to verifying documentation and reporting (i.e. the Project Implementation Reviews, Tracking Tool and CEO Endorsement template¹¹), which will be made available by the National Project Coordinator and Task Manager. The review will assess the extent to which both UN Environment and donor reporting commitments have been fulfilled.

Factors affecting this criterion may include: quality of project management and supervision and responsiveness to human rights and gender equity (e.g. disaggregated indicators and data).

H. Sustainability

39. Sustainability is understood as the probability of direct outcomes being maintained and developed after the close of the intervention. The review will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to undermine or contribute to the persistence of achieved direct outcomes. Some factors of sustainability may be embedded in the

¹⁰SMART refers to indicators that are specific, measurable, assignable, realistic and time-specific.

¹¹The Consultant(s) should verify that the annual Project Implementation Reviews have been submitted, that the Tracking Tool is being kept up-to-date and that in the CEO Endorsement template Table A and Section E have been completed.

project design and implementation approaches while others may be contextual circumstances or conditions that evolve over the life of the intervention. Where applicable an assessment of bio-physical factors that may affect the sustainability of direct outcomes may also be included. The review will ascertain that the project has put in place an appropriate exit strategy and measures to mitigate risks to sustainability.

i. Socio-political Sustainability

The review will assess the extent to which social or political factors support the continuation and further development of project direct outcomes. It will consider the level of ownership, interest and commitment among government and other stakeholders to take the project achievements forwards. In particular the review will consider whether individual capacity development efforts are likely to be sustained.

ii. Financial Sustainability

Some direct outcomes, once achieved, do not require further financial inputs, e.g. the adoption of a revised policy. However, in order to derive a benefit from this outcome further management action may still be needed e.g. to undertake actions to enforce the policy. Other direct outcomes may be dependent on a continuous flow of action that needs to be resourced for them to be maintained, e.g. continuation of a new resource management approach. The review will assess the extent to which project outcomes are dependent on future funding for the benefits they bring to be sustained. Secured future funding is only relevant to financial sustainability where the direct outcomes of a project have been extended into a future project phase. The question still remains as to whether the future project outcomes will be financially sustainable.

iii. Institutional Sustainability

The review will assess the extent to which the sustainability of project outcomes is dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance. It will consider whether institutional achievements such as governance structures and processes, policies, sub-regional agreements, legal and accountability frameworks etc. are robust enough to continue delivering the benefits associated with the project outcomes after project closure.

Factors affecting this criterion may include: stakeholders participation and cooperation; responsiveness to human rights and gender equity (e.g. where interventions are not inclusive, their sustainability may be undermined); communication and public awareness and country ownership and driven-ness.

I. Factors and Processes Affecting Project Performance

40. *These factors are rated in the ratings table, but are discussed as cross-cutting themes as appropriate under the other evaluation criteria, above.*

i. Preparation and Readiness

This criterion focuses on the inception or mobilisation stage of the project. The review will assess whether appropriate measures were taken to either address weaknesses in the project design or respond to changes that took place between project approval, the securing of funds and project mobilisation. In particular the review will consider the nature and quality of engagement with stakeholder groups by the project team, the confirmation of partner capacity and development of partnership agreements as well as initial staffing and financing arrangements. (Project preparation is covered in the template for the assessment of Project Design Quality).

ii. Quality of Project Implementation and Execution

Specifically for GEF funded projects, this factor refers separately to the performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping and supervision provided by UN Environment, as the implementing agency.

The review will assess the effectiveness of project management with regard to: providing leadership towards achieving the planned outcomes; managing team structures; maintaining productive partner relationships (including Steering Groups etc.); communication and collaboration with UN Environment colleagues; risk management; use of problem-solving; project adaptation and overall project execution. Evidence of adaptive project management should be highlighted.

iii. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation

Here the term 'stakeholder' should be considered in a broad sense, encompassing all project partners, duty bearers with a role in delivering project outputs and target users of project outputs and any other collaborating agents external to UN Environment. The assessment will consider the quality and effectiveness of all forms of communication and consultation with stakeholders throughout the project life and the support given to maximise collaboration and coherence between various stakeholders, including sharing plans, pooling resources and exchanging learning and expertise. The inclusion and participation of all differentiated groups, including gender groups, should be considered.

iv. Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equity

The review will ascertain to what extent the project has applied the UN Common Understanding on the human rights based approach (HRBA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Within this human rights context the review will assess to what extent the intervention adheres to UN Environment's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment.

The report should present the extent to which the intervention, following an adequate gender analysis at design stage, has implemented the identified actions and/or applied adaptive management to ensure that Gender Equity and Human Rights are adequately taken into account. In particular, the review will consider to what extent project design (section B), the implementation that underpins effectiveness (section D), and monitoring (section G) have taken into consideration: (i) possible gender inequalities in access to and the control over natural resources; (ii) specific vulnerabilities of women and children to environmental degradation or disasters; (iii) the role of women in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation.

v. Country Ownership and Driven-ness

The review will assess the quality and degree of engagement of government / public sector agencies in the project. The review will consider the involvement not only of those directly involved in project execution and those participating in technical or leadership groups, but also those official representatives whose cooperation is needed for change to be embedded in their respective institutions and offices. This factor is concerned with the level of ownership generated by the project over outputs and outcomes and that is necessary for long term impact to be realised. This ownership should adequately represent the needs and interests of all gender and marginalised groups.

vi. Communication and Public Awareness

The review will assess the effectiveness of: a) communication of learning and experience sharing between project partners and interested groups arising from the project during its life and b) public awareness activities that were undertaken during the implementation of the project to influence attitudes or shape behaviour among wider communities and civil society at large. The review should consider whether existing communication channels and networks were used effectively, including meeting the differentiated needs of gender or marginalised groups, and whether any feedback channels were established. Where knowledge sharing platforms have been established under a project the review will comment on the sustainability of the communication channel under either socio-political, institutional or financial sustainability, as appropriate.

Section 3. REVIEW APPROACH, METHODS AND DELIVERABLES

41. The Mid-Term Review will use a participatory approach whereby key stakeholders are kept informed and consulted throughout the review process. Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods will be used as appropriate to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. It is highly recommended that the consultant(s) maintains close communication with the project team and promotes information exchange throughout the review implementation phase in order to increase their (and other stakeholder) ownership of the review findings. Where applicable, the consultant(s) should provide a geo-referenced map that demarcates the area covered by the project and, where possible, provide geo-reference photographs of key intervention sites (e.g. sites of habitat rehabilitation and protection, pollution treatment infrastructure, etc.)

42. The findings of the review will be based on the following:

(a) **A desk review of:**

- Relevant background documentation, inter alia GEF, UN ENVIRONMENT, UNDP, and MINEC approved project and revision documents and annexes; PIRs;
- UN ENVIRONMENT and UNDP guidance documents for GEF-MSP Mid-Term Review (e.g. templates, tables and guidance notes)
- Project design documents (including minutes of the project design review meeting at approval); Work plan and budget, including annual revisions(Project Document Supplement), the logical framework and its budget;
- Project reports such as quarterly Expenditure Reports; half-yearly Progress Reports; and any other financial reports, procurement plan(s), progress reports from collaborating partners, meeting minutes, relevant correspondence and including the Project Implementation Reviews and Tracking Tool etc.;
- Project outputs including, inter alia: ToRs and final reports of consultancies and subcontracts, reports of meetings, trainings, workshops and consultations inclusive of lists of participants, publications, list of purchases/acquisitions and their rationale/justification, evidence of any technical Products finalized; BCH,

- project Website and a list of other internet locations (e.g. websites or social network platforms) where information about the project have been provided);
 - Evaluations/Reviews of similar projects.
- (b) **Interviews** (carried-on via internet) with:
- UN Environment Task Manager (TM);
 - Project management team;
 - UNDP: relevant staff involved with the project;
 - UN Environment Programme Management Assistant
 - Project partners and relevant resource persons, including participants to workshops or training/public initiatives, consultants, involved scientists, and representatives of project-related government agencies, industry and commercial sector, local NGOs and other project targeted areas.
- (c) **Other data collection tools**
- Short videos, to be discussed with the Project National Coordinator, supporting the documentation provided (e.g. laboratory equipment and procedures, public participation mechanism, etc.)

11. Review Deliverables and Review Procedures

43. The review team will prepare:

- **Inception Report:** (see Annex 1 for links to all templates, tables and guidance notes) containing an assessment of project design quality, a draft reconstructed Theory of Change of the project, project stakeholder analysis, review framework and a tentative review schedule.
- **Preliminary Findings Note:** typically in the form of a powerpoint presentation, the sharing of preliminary findings is intended to support the participation of the project team, act as a means to ensure all information sources have been accessed and provide an opportunity to verify emerging findings.
- **Draft and Final Review Report:** (see links in Annex 1) containing an executive summary that can act as a stand alone document; detailed analysis of the review findings organised by review criteria and supported with evidence; lessons learned and recommendations and an annotated ratings table.

44. **Review of the draft review report.** The review team will submit a draft report to the Project Management Unit and Task Manager and revise the draft in response to their comments and suggestions. Once a draft of adequate quality has been peer-reviewed and accepted, the Project Management Unit will share the cleared draft report with key project stakeholders for their review and comments. Stakeholders may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions as well as providing feedback on the proposed recommendations and lessons. Any comments or responses to draft reports will be sent to the PMU for consolidation. The PMU will provide all comments to the review team for consideration in preparing the final report, along with guidance on areas of contradiction or issues requiring an institutional response.

45. The Project Management Unit and Task Manager will prepare a **quality assessment** of the first and final drafts of the main review report, which acts as a tool for providing structured feedback to the review consultants. The quality of the report will be assessed and rated against the criteria specified in template listed in Annex 1.

46. At the end of the review process, the PMU will prepare a **Recommendations Implementation Plan** in the format of a table, to be completed and updated at regular intervals.

12. The Review Team

47. For this review, the review team will consist of a Consultant who will work under the overall responsibility of the National Project Coordinator, Carliz Diaz, in consultation with relevant authorities at MINEC and the Task Manager. The Consultant will liaise with the National Project Coordinator on any procedural and methodological matters related to the review. It is, however, the consultants' individual responsibility to obtain documentary evidence, plan online meetings with stakeholders, organize online surveys, and any other logistical matters related to the assignment. The National Project Coordinator and project team will, where possible, provide logistical support (introductions, meetings etc.) allowing the consultants to conduct the review as efficiently and independently as possible.

48. The consultant will be hired for 2 months spread over the period from 01/10/2020 to 31/01/2021 and should have: an advanced university degree in agricultural or environmental sciences, international development or other relevant political, social or scientific area; a minimum of 3 years of technical / evaluation experience of biosafety projects, including of evaluating large, regional or global programmes; a broad understanding of international

cooperation mechanisms and, multi-lateral environmental agreements with special focus on the activity of the Convention of Biological Diversity and its Biosafety protocols (i.e. Cartagena and Nagoya); fluency in Spanish along with excellent writing skills in English; team leadership experience and, where possible, knowledge of the UN system, specifically of the work of UN Environment. Experience in managing partnerships, knowledge management and communication is desirable.

49. The Consultant will be responsible, in close consultation with the National Project Coordinator and Task Manager, for overall management of the review and timely delivery of its outputs, described above in Section 11 Evaluation Deliverables, above. The consultant will ensure that all evaluation criteria and questions are adequately covered.

50. Details of Evaluation Consultants' Team Roles can be found on the Evaluation Office of UN Environment website <https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach>

13. Schedule of the Review

51. The table below presents the tentative schedule for the review.

Table 3. Tentative schedule for the review

Milestone	Deadline
Inception Mission (virtual)	01 October 2020
Kick-off meeting (via internet)	2nd week of October 2020
Inception Report	mid - November 2020
Telephone interviews, surveys etc.	20 October - 30 November 2020
Preliminary Findings Note	6 December 2020
Draft report to Task Manager	15 January 2021
Final Main Review Report	31 January 2021

14. Contractual Arrangements

52. Review Consultants will be selected and recruited by the Fund Management Agency under the direction of the National Project Coordinator on a "fees only" basis (see below). By signing the service contract with UN Environment/UNON, the consultant(s) certify that they have not been associated with the design and implementation of the project in any way which may jeopardize their independence and impartiality towards project achievements and project partner performance. In addition, they will not have any future interests (within six months after completion of the contract) with the project's executing or implementing units. All consultants are required to sign the Code of Conduct Agreement Form.

53. Fees will be paid on an instalment basis, paid on acceptance by the Task Manager of expected key deliverables. The schedule of payment is as follows:

54. Schedule of Payment for the [Consultant/Team Leader]:

Deliverable	Percentage Payment	Date
Approved Inception Report	30%	15-November 2020
Approved Draft Main Review Report	30%	15 January 2021
Approved Final Main Review Report	40%	31 January 2021

55. The consultant may be provided with access to UN Environment's Anubis system and if such access is granted, the consultants agree not to disclose information from that system to third parties beyond information required for, and included in, the review report.

56. In case the consultant are not able to provide the deliverables in accordance with these guidelines, and in line with the expected quality standards by the National Project Coordinator and Task Manager, payment may be withheld at the discretion of the Head of Branch/Unit until the consultants have improved the deliverables to meet UN Environment's quality standards.

57. If the consultant fails to submit a satisfactory final product to the National Project Coordinator in a timely manner, i.e. before the end date of their contract, reserves the right to employ additional human resources to finalize the report, and to reduce the consultants' fees by an amount equal to the additional costs borne by UN Environment to bring the report up to standard.

Annex 1 : Tools, Templates and Guidance Notes for use in the Review

The tools, templates and guidance notes listed in the table below, and available on the Evaluation Office website (<https://www.unenvironment.org/about-un-environment/evaluation-office/our-evaluation-approach>), are intended to help National Project Coordinator and Review Consultants to produce review products that are consistent with each other and which contribute to UN Environment results reporting. This suite of documents is also intended to make the review process as transparent as possible so that all those involved in the process can participate on an informed basis. It is recognised that the review needs of projects and portfolio vary and adjustments may be necessary so that the purpose of the review process (broadly, accountability and lesson learning), can be met. Such adjustments should be decided between the National Project Coordinator, Task Manager and the Review Consultant in order to produce review reports that are both useful to project implementers and that produce credible findings.

Document	Name
1	01_MTR_Evaluation_Criteria_04.11.19.doc
2	02_MTR_Criterion_rating_descriptions_matrix_09.12.19.docx
3	03_MTR_Evaluation_Ratings_Table_ONLY_04.11.19.docx
4	04_MTR_Weightings for Ratings_14.01.20.xlsx
5	05_MTR_Project_Identification_Table_ONLY_4.11.19.docx
6	06_MTR_Inception Report_Structure & Contents 12.12.19.doc
7	07_MTR_Main Review Report_Structure & Contents_12.12.19.doc
8	08_MTR_Quality_of_Project_Design_Assessment_OPTIONAL_09.12.19.doc
9	09_MTR_Stakeholder Analysis_Guidance Note_20.11.19.doc
10	10_MTR_Gender_Methods_Note for Consultants_20.11.19.docx
11	11_MTR_Financial Tables 09.12.19.doc
12	12_MTR_Likelihood of impact 22.11.19.xlsm
13	13_MTR_In Report Template_Presenting_Recs and LL_25.06.20.docx
14	14_MTR_Recommendation_Impl_Plan_Template_19.09.19.docx
15	MTR_GEF_Cover Page Prelims and Style Sheet Main Review Report .doc
16	MTR_GEF_Tools Description_15.04.2020.docx
17	PENDING. Review_Possible Evaluation Questions 11.07.19.docx
18	PENDING. Review_Use of Theory of Change in Project Evaluation.docx
19	Process 1_List of Documents needed for Reviews_09.12.19.docx
20	Process 2_MTR_Assess Quality of the Mid Term Review Report_10.09.19.docx

CRITERIOS DE EVALUACIÓN TÉCNICA

EVALUACIÓN TÉCNICA (ET) – 70%	PUNTUACIÓN MAXIMA
Formación Académica	
Ingeniería agraria, agronómica, genética o afín: 10	20
Grado de Especialización en biotecnología: 20	
Experiencia profesional en el área de gestión e información de tecnología en temas y/o proyectos del Convenio sobre Diversidad Biológica (Secretaría de la Convención sobre Diversidad Biológica (SCBD))	
1 a 2 años de experiencia: 15	25
Más de 2 años de experiencia: 25	
Con conocimiento/experiencia comprobable del programa en los temas del programa del Centro de Intercambio de Información sobre Seguridad de la Biotecnología	
1 a 2 años de experiencia: 10	15
Más de 2 años de experiencia: 15	
Con conocimiento de la realidad del país y en sus desafíos en materia de conservación de la biodiversidad	
1 a 2 años de experiencia: 3	5
Más de 2 años de experiencia: 5	
Con conocimiento/experiencia comprobable vinculada a Proyectos Regionales para América Latina y el Caribe, PNUMA-FMAM en Bioseguridad	
Entre 1-4 años de experiencia: 5	10
Más de 4 años experiencia: 10	
Con conocimiento/experiencia comprobable en el área de manejo de programas de Bioseguridad	
Entre 1-3 años de experiencia: 05	10
Más de 3 años experiencia: 10	
Propuesta técnica: Metodología y plan de trabajo propuestos en respuesta a los términos de referencia	
Correspondencia de la propuesta con los TDR. Planeación detallada de actividades.	15
Débil: 0	
Aceptable: 12	
Sobresaliente con aporte de valor agregado:15	
TOTAL	100

ANNEX VIII. QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE REVIEW REPORT

Evaluation office to insert